

SOME THOUGHTS ABOUT OUR EDUCATORS

Our educators are called by many names - teachers, mentors, facilitators, instructors - and sometimes, even accidentally, mum or dad. This leaves little doubt that mothers, fathers, grandpa's and grandpa's should also be included in our definition of educators.

It doesn't really matter what our educators are called, we should all be in agreement that outstanding educators truly have a gift for influencing lives inside and outside of classrooms. All of us should be able to recall at least one special educator, if not more, who has profoundly impacted on our lives.

Natural educators are the awe-inspiring leaders of learning. They work tirelessly to enrich the lives of the next generation - but their devotion to hard work and eternal positivity often go unnoticed.

The primary purpose of education is to promote the life-long values and skills that illuminate our day-to-day experiences. "Education" has been defined as "an enlightening experience." and has its beginnings in the Latin word "educare", meaning "to nurture."

From amusing to inspirational, from inquisitive to knowledgeable, from curious to appreciative, the following insights should generate some gratefulness - and maybe even provide a smile or two for the educators who have shared part of their lives with you.

How have some of the great educators defined education?

"Education is the creation of a sound mind in a sound body." - Aristotle

"Intelligence plus character—that is the goal of true education."
- Martin Luther King Jr.

"No matter what global problem you are dreading, whether it's the elimination of poverty, whether it's the creation of peace, whether it's solving environmental energy problems, the solution always include education." - Nicholas Negroponte

"Teaching kids to count is fine, but teaching them what counts is best."
- Bob Talbert

"Nine-tenths of education is encouragement." - Anatole France

"Good teachers are the ones who can challenge young minds without losing their own." - Source Unknown

"I like a teacher who gives you something to take home to think about besides homework". - Lily Tomlin

"Educators are the only people who lose sleep over other people's kids."
- Nicholas A. Ferroni

“Teachers can change lives with just the right mix of chalk and challenges.”

- Joyce Meyer

“The dream begins with a teacher who believes in you, who tugs and pushes and leads you to the next plateau, sometimes poking you with a sharp stick called ‘truth’.” - Dan Rather

“A good teacher is like a candle - it consumes itself to light the way for others.”

- Mustafa Kemal Atatürk

“It is the teacher that makes the difference, not the classroom.”

- Michael Morpurgo

“The greatest asset of any school is the personality of the teacher.” - John Strachan

“The best teacher of children is one who is essentially childlike.” - H. L. Mencken

“A good teacher can inspire hope, ignite the imagination, and instil a love of learning.” - Brad Henry

“The art of teaching is the art of assisting discovery.” - Mark Van Doren

“Education is our passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs to the people who prepare for it today.” - Malcolm X

“It is the supreme art of the teacher to awaken joy in creative expression and knowledge.” - Albert Einstein

“Schooling does not always lead to learning. Worldwide, there are more non-learners in school than out of school.” – UNICEF.

It is worthy of note that, in 1859, John Stuart Mill - an English philosopher who was one of the most influential thinkers of the time - wrote “A general State education is a mere contrivance for moulding people to be exactly like one another: and as the mould in which it casts them is that which pleases the predominant power in the government.”

Since these times, although there have been various innovative attempts to improve the education systems, the influence and role of the professional educator has remained largely the same.

1800s: Distance Education Remote learning was first implemented in the 1800s through mail services. In the US, a private institution called the International Correspondence Schools was established in 1888 to reskill immigrant coal miners into mine inspectors or foremen. The school observed a rise in enrolment rates since they mailed complete textbooks instead of just singular lessons. The increased accessibility to learning also helped triple the number of college students in the century.

1900s: Radio and Television Instruction The invention of the radio and television allowed educational institutions to leverage technology as a learning tool. For instance, the Pennsylvania State College became the first institution to release educational courses through radio networks in 1922.

1990s: Web-Based Schooling In the 1990s the University of Phoenix launched an online delivery system that offered bachelor's and master's degree programs. Microsoft established an online educational platform in 1995 to allow students to learn how to use Microsoft products at a flexible pace. A year later, The Jones International University was launched as the first accredited and fully web-based university in the US.

2000s: Data-Driven Instruction Aside from using computers and smart devices for learning, educational institutions are now leveraging technology to input, organise, and analyse school data to improve existing systems by gathering information and applying it to improve the learning outcomes of students.

2020s: Mixed Reality Learning The rise of remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic pushed academic institutions to utilise various innovations for learning. Some providers are using augmented reality systems to show layers of visual information as well as using virtual reality to allow students to interact with computer-generated three-dimensional settings.

Why is it that today's education systems seems to be outdated and insufficient?

Our teachers, administrators and policy makers should possess adequate philosophical understanding of education. The creation of a resilient and effective education system is only achievable through the collective efforts of all involved.

In essence, irrespective of cultural and ideological differences, the process and aim of living a quality life is what binds us together - and is the very basis for all forms of education. Good teachers provide the glue that holds this all together.

The impact of John Dewey - philosopher, psychologist, and educational reformer - was most apparent during the early twentieth century. He firmly believed that "Education is a process of living and not a preparation for future living."

Most of our current teachers, whatever their circumstances and wherever they live, should be nodding their heads in agreement.