

True Education

This post is a critique of the school system and the way I see it. It's not necessarily an endorsement of homeschooling, but it's pretty close.

This entire thing was actually inspired by a few people telling me about their massive debts from student loans and my observations of people around me.

I went to a charter school for about twelve years. The teachers there were mostly very good and generous. My somewhat negative viewpoint is not a reflection of them, but of the system.

The first time I noticed something was severely wrong in the educational system was when my 8th grade English teacher said that he wasn't allowed to say his personal political or religious views due to the risk of offending someone.

This charter school had a very good mixture of both liberal and conservative students. Even though I was a very right-wing oriented teenager, I couldn't see the harm in him sharing his views as long as he said that it was a reflection of himself and not the school.

It wasn't politically correct for him to challenge students to think. He had to stay by the strict rules of teaching or else he'll get fired.

He was a staunch leftist from what I gathered, but there was still some things that I feel students could have taken away from him. Literature can have very strong political and religious biases and his opinions on those things could have made students actually think for themselves.

I also noticed that people always put emphasis on things like getting good grades and graduating to an upper-class university.

That doesn't sound bad on the surface for many people, however there is one thing that we are not really seeing.

Odds are, the youth that are graduating now weren't taught to use their heads and to actually apply logical knowledge in to what they're doing. They think that once they get that college degree, everything will magically click in the real world.

I don't believe it's the school's job to teach students things like that. If anything, it's the parents' job.

However, I do see a huge amount of dishonesty within it all.

I have a variety of things that people consider to be “learning disabilities”. I personally consider them blessings because they’ve given me very unique viewpoints on everything.

The charter school tried very hard to make me apply myself to their method of doing things. I also went to an online school that wasn’t very different when I compared it to the one I transferred from.

I probably had a dozen meetings with school administrators and counselors explaining to me that it was essential that I learned to do things their way.

Don’t get me wrong, they were trying their very best to help me succeed within the boundaries they were given. Again, this is not a critique of who they were.

I felt horrible inside and I tried to do it their way, but I found that many things that they were trying to make me do weren’t very educating at all and were extremely pointless. I wanted to learn more and do things for myself.

I eventually dropped out for a semester because I got tired of the bureaucratic methods of everything associated with those systems.

The next school year, I entered this program for students who were “high on skills and intelligence, but low on credits”.

The entire program was very work-oriented. You clocked in and out for four hours a night.

You were expected to do things yourself. The program was perfect for me.

In a matter of two and a half months, I finished school in a program that’s designed to stretch out for a year. I also finished sooner than my graduating class at other schools and I only had 4.5 credits (23 are usually required).

It was a very surprising turn of events (to say the least).

In other words, I did it my own way and I didn’t need a constant person on my back to tell me how to learn things. I was already a very self-taught person, I just needed space to do the work by myself without interference from other people.

I was one of those outliers that public schools never think of.

Oops.

So, the question I ask is this: what is true education?

Is true education diving into textbooks and doing tons of homework or is it thinking for yourself?

I was taught by my parents to explore things on my own. They pretty much let me have free reigns on my life after the age of fifteen. I learned more from my screw-ups and successes more than the schools I've attended.

I don't think it's a solely the school system's fault either. It's our entire culture right now.

The fears of offending people or saying things that aren't socially acceptable have consumed the mass majority way too much.

It's gotten to the point where it's not a very polite thing to discuss anything deep and to just accept the things you want to believe without providing some sort of intellectual case for them.

Because of this, the 18-24 age bracket I'm a part of is very shockingly dumbed down.

Somehow, the older generations have left it up to the schools to teach this generation things that aren't going to help them in the long run.

School systems are generally designed for majorities. There are tons of people who have issues like mine that are being told that they have character flaws due to the way they can't conform to the schools' methods of doing things.

Teenagers seem to have embraced this false concept that having good grades and getting accepted to Harvard means that you're an expert on everything.

However, they tend to lack the logical knowledge it takes to succeed in the real world after they get that degree.

How can older generations say that they succeeded in raising this generation with problems like these?

I can tell you, with 100% certainty, that it won't be the people who have college degrees without knowing how to use them that will make something of themselves.

It will be the people who have received true education that will dig themselves out while making successful careers in the process.

That, at the end of the day, is something we should be more concerned about than what is inside a textbook.

-ZA

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