

EDUCATION

Education or also referred to as learning, teaching or schooling is a social institution which refers to the actions depicted by a teacher or educator by which a person, usually a child, is trained in the skills and values of the previous generations in which all the accumulated knowledge they gained is carried over to the learner (Wikipedia). Another definition or explanation for education is that it is a process of teaching, training and learning which generally takes place within schools and or colleges in order to improve knowledge and to develop skills (Dictionary) Therefore from these definitions for the institution of education we can conclude that the main aim or goal in education is to enable people to live a prosperous and good life (Brighouse, 2006:15).

The view on education is different for the different disciplines which study this institution. The discipline of Sociology is basically concerned with the role education as institution has on the management and maintenance of the society. (Joubert & Snyman 2011 :15)

As we concluded in the previous paragraphs, the aim of education is to help or enable people to become literate. To be literate in general means that a person is able to read and write which in pre-modern times was basically all that was needed to have a sustainable and prosperous life. As times changes various other aspects of humanity change as well, including education. One of the main reasons for the drastic and quick changes in education is the continuing development and improvement of information communication technologies or in short ICTs. Future funding also plays a huge role in the changing nature of education worldwide. (Giddens, 2006:870)

Before the mid 19's the role of the church was not only to spiritually care for people but also to educate them. The church was unable to provide in the educational needs of everybody which had the effect that only a few people in positions such as priesthood or business owners were literate. (Joubert & Snyman 2011 :16) When the industrial era dawned the need for specialised skills emerged and this brought about the onset of mass education which was then the task of the government. Therefore the definition of mass education is the education that is provided for all the people within the country by the government.

The industrial era brought a great amount of change in the nature of education but the basic aim was still the same, to make people literate, but the extent to which a person should be literate was greatly enlarged. It is also noted that more recently more students are enrolling at higher education institutes which is evident that the need for specialised knowledge has yet again increased. (Joubert & Snyman 2011 :15-17)

With the onset of mass education the governments saw that there was a need for venues and institutions which were specifically designed and equipped to educate people. (Giddens, 2006:870) This onset was the driving force for the building of schools, from which we can now distinguish between pre-schools, primary schools, high schools, colleges and universities as well as various other educational institutions which specialise in different disciplines or skills. All of these educational ventures has the same basic curriculum and point of view.

Primary schools form the first part of the compulsory education a child must have and it lasts for roughly eight years. Primary schools admit children from around the ages of four to five and these children are firstly taught to read and write as well as the basics of mathematics so that they are literate. Once they are literate and can achieve all the required outcomes they are ready to go to high school or secondary school as it is called in some countries over the world. (Wikipedia)

High school or secondary school is usually characterised as the final stage of the compulsory education a child must undergo. During this stage of education the child which is now in his or her teens is prepared and refined in all the different fields which is presented in order for this student to be able to further his studies on the higher educational level which is non compulsory. (Wikipedia)

Higher education was and is the answer to the need for specialised skills needed by people in order to do certain jobs or complete certain tasks. Higher education refers to the education a person undergoes after he or she has finished school and is done by colleges, universities or other approved higher educational institutions. This form of education differs from society to society and is therefore not compulsory for all pupils to attend such an institute. It is however a given fact that in this day and age a person must have something more to show than just a normal high school education if he or she wants to have a good job with a steady and higher than average income. (Joubert & Snyman 2011 :16)

All of the above mentioned forms of education was the norm until various factors influenced them and forced these forms to be revised. Some examples include different religions, languages, needs and gender as well as the issue of class and level of education as all of the schools which was government funded had to comply to certain rules and regulations in order for them to keep their subsidies (Joubert & Snyman 2011 :16). Today we have not only public schools which still have a government subsidy but we also have privatised schools and educational institutions to cater for the specific needs of the people as well as various home-schooling ventures which are all used to a great extent.

Another phenomenon is that of the private educational sector which was created by the different needs and classes of societies. This is however more evident in the westernised countries but can be found all around the globe. This sector focuses on education which is paid in full by the student and or his parents as there are little or no state subsidies involved for this type of organisation. This has the effect that the schools only have to comply to certain curriculum requirements and have the opportunity to practice only one religion or admit only one gender, which ever might be the case. (Joubert & Snyman 2011 :17)

It must also be mentioned that these private institutions pride themselves in providing the best service and highest level of education such as is the case with Yale university as well as Harvard in the United States of America, as this is the trend it is clear that these forms of educational institutes employ more staff, use higher quality materials and spend more on research in order to be at the forefront in the disciplines which they teach in. This yields the result that they spend large amounts of money in order to meet their goals. This money can be gained from research subsidies granted to them by the government or it can all come from the students and or their parents (Altbach & Engberg, 2001:1).

Due to the fact that we find ourselves in an era where technological knowhow and computer literacy is a requirement for most job positions it is vital that the different phases and institutions of education addresses this need in order to effectively provide the community with the best possible electronic education in order to ensure the technological literacy and competence of their students. (Joubert & Snyman 2011 :17)

Together with the privatisation of educational institutes came the electronic educational institutes which addressed the need of technological literacy and provided the students with the opportunity to not only study their desired discipline but to also help them to become more computer and technological literate by making use of various forms of technology in order to complete the degree or course they enrolled for. Various forms of electronic educational mediums can be distinguished, some of them include online forms and others are presented using DVDs or CDs in order to convey the required knowledge. The electronic form of education is also available for all the different stages and phases in education and they range from pre-primary and primary institutes to higher educational institutes.

From the above paragraphs it is clear that education changed drastically all over the world in order to adapt to the various new trends, fads and fashions of our ever changing environment. Today education is seen as one of the most crucial and basic human rights people must have by most of the countries around the world due to its importance to ensure growth and development. (Joubert & Snyman 2011 :16) The openness to change within the education sector is vital as this will ensure that they will be able to provide in the needs and demands of the students and the companies and individuals which will make use of their specialised skills acquired through the institute of education.

We have seen how education has adapted to suit the needs of people and provide in their quest for more answers and knowledge and this could not have been achieved if people and the education sector was unwilling to change. The most influencing factor of the changes in education is however the different societies and their ever changing needs. The changing nature of education globally has many advantages as well as disadvantages. But these changes are vital for the continued development and growth of the education industry and must the disadvantages be dealt with in order to streamline education for all.

References:

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