

Education in the New Era

WHAT does it mean to be educated in this new era? With the emergence of technology and technological solutions, education is not as it used to be. While many have argued that technology has done more harm than good to education, there has been major development to the face of education, especially in this new era. Before you can understand this concept, you need to understand what education looked like before this era.

The earliest formal school was in Egypt, but it was only available to royal offspring and sons of the rich, physicians, scribes and temple administrators. Here, their education was restricted to the duties that they performed. Also girls were not allowed education, as they stayed home with their mothers learning cooking and household duties. But as school became more widespread in China, France, India, and other empires and provinces, more population became literate, including women. Different empires and provinces had different styles of formal education, but one thing was common to all of them; education was restricted to enabling moral enlightenment. Also, the percentage of people who had formal education was few, as it was restricted to a few privileged people.

During the early middle ages, the monasteries of the Catholic Church were the hub of formal education. As such, the first schools in this time were monastic schools, where the teachers were the monks and priests. Students were proud of their masters and unlike education in the early times, it was mostly free. This was because the church mandated that every priest and monk educated their flock. The curriculum was also restricted to the liberal arts such as music, poetry, dancing, writing and speaking.

Coming down to the fifteenth century, schools derived their origins from the monastic schools of the middle ages and as such had religious bases and free education for the poor was mandated by the church. However in the seventeenth century, a new form of education was adopted, which moved from the liberal arts curriculum to a more universal one. Rather than specializing in one or more of the arts, subjects were broad, although mostly science related.

Increasing interest in education from the authorities caused an analysis into teaching methods and in 1884, there was an education conference in London, which attracted education experts from all over the world and caused a shift in the educational systems.

Since then, education has undergone major developments, especially with the proliferation of technology, showing major difference between education of the old era and the new era. In the new era, schools are secular and

publicly owned, although there are still private schools owned by religious organizations.

In most countries, education in the new era is compulsory up to the age of 16. In fact, there have been major strides in increasing the dropout age to 18. Also, more women hold degrees of higher education, as compared to education in the old era which restricted women from getting educated.

Because technology influences the types of job people can have, making conventional jobs obsolete, educational systems are changing to accommodate these new trends. This is seen in the proliferation of new courses of study. According to Tony Wagner, in 'Creating Innovators: The Making of Young People who would Change the World.' thriving in this new era would require real competence rather than good grades. As a result of this trend, schools are no longer focused on conventional subjects, but on building educated persons who are creative and can think critically. This they achieve through internships, community service, personal school projects, etc.

In the new era, students can opt for laptops, smart phones and tablets, instead of books, which can be destroyed and cause loss of information. Also, education is no longer restricted by distance, because students can have access to education from the comfort of their bedrooms, through distance learning portals. Access to learning materials is unprecedented in the new era, as podcast, videos, audios and even books can be downloaded from the internet. Teachers also have ease of teaching, as they are not the primary source of information. The role of teachers is gradually shifting to guides, as students take more responsibility for their learning. Technology has also aided them in creating instructional materials and also in enhancing their teaching materials.

Furthermore, student learning experience is enriched as they can collaborate with other students from farther places using technology. They can even learn from the results of research carried out by other students, made possible by the internet. They can collaborate on projects through the use of Google docs, and other available applications.

Since the early age when education developed in Egypt, education has gone through developmental phases, showing remarkable changes in the new era. Technology has been a major determinant in this development, because it has changed the way people get educated. Education in the new era is still a work in progress as more changes will be observed in the near future.

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