

2016 International Essay Contest for Young People

[Children's Category – Honorable Mention]

Education for Peace not Pieces
(Original)

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In the last century, mankind has advanced significantly and so have our educational systems. However, today our world faces many complex problems and our learning objectives must reorient to address these challenges; with improvisation and adaptation of methods, towards outcomes that create a sustainable and better future for all.

Education can steer the world towards peace and prevent it from breaking into pieces. However, before assessing ideas for ideal education, it is prerequisite to ensure education for all, especially in underdeveloped and developing countries. Education cannot be treated as just another business or profit avenue, but rather as a basic need of society and fundamental right of every individual, without any discrimination whatsoever.

It is unfortunate that children who most need the benefit of education are those most deprived of it. Governments need to work on expansion of affordable localized schooling to reduce hardships faced by young children. Provision of better and inclusive educational environment, decentralization of learning and small group learning can help further. For remote areas, I suggest mobile schools that reach the children rather than the other way round.

Free primary education and free meals in state run schools; can help boost attendance. Furthermore, child labour must be banned strictly to ensure that children from economically weaker sections are sent to schools rather than being used as earning members of their families.

Another aspect to be prioritized- is elimination of gender discrimination. Empowerment of girls and women can have a far reaching positive impact on their lives, and on the lives of their families, their communities and society as a whole. Obstacles faced by girls, especially at secondary levels need to be assessed and eliminated. Early marriages have to be legally abolished. Violence in and around schools can be tackled through improved security and integrating self defense into education of girls. Educators also need to consider gender sensitive contents and learning environments.

After achieving basic education for all, we have to analyze the quality. In addition to imparting knowledge, education has to be multifaceted to serve as a foundation for a stable life and to pilot a better world. Application based education can ensure that students are able to apply their knowledge in real life situations. Skill based education including vocational training can further contribute to economic and social stability.

Conflicts, wars and terrorism rampant in our societies, can then be tackled through a paradigm shift in the mindset of people. This can be brought about by a value based pedagogical system. Projects and tasks that require collaboration and teamwork can be integrated into the curricula. This can be extended across borders through exchange programs, debates and workshops that bring together students from different parts of the world. Such initiatives can contribute to improved sensitivity and friendly relations among diverse sections of society.

Furthermore, humanities subjects often tend to focus more on regional content. Foreign languages, history of different cultures and study of current affairs with a focus on seeking solutions to existing problems can lead to a better understanding, tolerance and empathy; and eventually a more peaceful world. Education can promote diversity as an asset, rather than a source of conflict.

Awareness about environmental sustainability is another need of the day. However, besides teaching scientific principles; and emphasizing the perils of pollution and global warming- our education should highlight the beauty of our planet, make us feel it and be touched by it. 'Green Schools' can reintroduce nature into our growing years, breeding appreciation and

respect for the environment. Living with nature can generate the momentum to reverse the negative impact of consumerism in our heavily industrialized world.

Last but not the least, for us to salvage our future, it is not just twelve year olds like me, who need education, but also grown-ups, who hold the batons till my generation takes over. Adult education and awareness drives can catalyze a social transformation, crucial for a sustainable future, with economic, social, cultural, political and ecological, stability.

In conclusion, ideal education has to be dynamic and flexible, to adapt to a progressively changing world; because neither knowledge nor intelligence, but 'better management of change' is perhaps the missing ingredient in the recipe for a sustainable bright future.