

Reviewing hannah arendit's book, between past and future

[Profession](#), [Philosophers](#)



Arendt Essay

Hannah Arendt, in her book titled "Between Past & Future," claimed that a crisis of education is a crisis in politics, even more so in America. This claim came from section five of the book known as "The Crisis in Education." Her claim comes not as a surprise, because many of the factors that she previously covered in the book laid way for this attack on our way of life; regrettably we still to which have today. She first began to explain her claim with her reasons why.

According to Arendt, in America, a crisis of education is a crisis in politics because the two are almost interchangeable. Now yes, when we think about it they are two different entities, and yet when you get down to the basis of both education and politics, they are practically one and the same. Education comes as a must in both America and politics yet for many it seems to be the exact opposite. An analogy would be that many people feel that politicians are just plain dumb in some of their answers to problems and we wonder why. We wonder what were they thinking when they said that, what was going through their mind, do they even have a mind? All of those would be good questions to ask them if they didn't go through a screwed-up educational system, however, that's why they act the way they do and say the things they say. It all revolves around how they were educated and what they were taught to do and say; the same as you and I. As it has been referred to, people wish that we would just go back to how our educational system was when it last worked. Well, when really was that? The general consensus to that is never. And so Arendt says that "the American

educational system... [is deeply] rooted in the political attitude of the country" (177).

Education and politics have a lot to do with each other beyond just providing elementary skills and job training. The first and foremost idea that Arendt discusses in relation of the two is common sense. She says this America "relies...extensively on common sense in its political life" (175) which is taught, or rather supposed to be taught, in its educational system. Since we rely on that common sense, however we know it, and have seen time and time again in the history of our politics, that it sometimes fails. Arendt refers to that as "the place where...a cave-in has occurred" (175) such as from a divining rod. That failure of common sense is also known as a present-day crisis, not that it hasn't done so in the past, but an explanation is deemed necessary to know why we are in this crisis. Arendt offers a few explanations starting with that we, America, are really just young and haven't caught up with the higher standards set such as in Europe. She compares us with "the Old World" (175) such as including Europe and yet says that we are at the same time more advanced than the rest of the world. When we are both insulted and complimented at the same time it is hard to tell what to fix and what to not, hence the situation that we are in right now and have been for some time. The crisis of the last decade is another name for the crisis of education and has maintained that name for quite some time. We have managed to progress in some areas and regress in others because of luck in many of those cases.

Politics brings a lot of points to the table and this crisis of education has been one of them. The center of these arguments is revolved around what to do about it? The answer has yet to be said and yet lots of these points have been made. A first one is to question the importance of keeping education as a standard here in America. That really is the main one in that as a society we need to weigh the importance of having an educated society versus non-educated. The effects of not having our standard educational system would be even more devastating that what we are currently at. If the public educational system were abolished, then only those with the means to pay for it could enjoy the benefits of such and the “equality of opportunity” (176) that we hold so dear to in the U. S. would be lost. Another point is that of why can't Johnny read? The elementary abilities to read and write are one thing, but being able to vote and make decisions using common sense come right along with that. Our political and educational system, if not our country, are based on common sense of its citizens. It would be a grave mistake to not acknowledge the crisis we are in because this crisis in education is not really just of education but that of our economy, politics, society, and hence really our whole country. The next question to ask would then be: why us?

The crisis is most acute in America because of two reasons, and yet it is even more important to define what a crisis really is. A crisis can be defined as what happens when common sense answers don't work. The first reason is because we based our country off of being a semi-utopia. Our forefathers wanted their children, grandchildren, and everyone else to have a place to be that was fair and just, unlike where they came from, England. They

wanted the best for them and so set in place laws and rules to create a nice and happy life the best they could, and so making America a semi-utopia of sorts. The second, and really the most important reason, is that America has and seems like always will be pro-immigrant. Arendt acknowledges this when she says that “ continuous immigration plays [a large role] in the country’s political consciousness and frame of mind” (172). The old values and customs of the immigrants travel with them and land in America and stay here. Our society is ever adapting and changing with cultural and ethnic changes coming from immigration and so it is hard for our educational system to get a firm grip on the situation.

Arendt is partially right in that the crisis is most acute in America. The reasoning for that is because there have been a number of studies that show that America’s educational system is on the decline by large, but the studies fail to include other factors. One such factor that Arendt emphasized earlier on is that of our country’s age. Comparing the U. S. to Europe is like comparing a computer to a rock, of course the rock is older and so also more experienced. There are newer countries out there that are younger than us and have a worse educational system, and yet all we care about are ourselves because we as a society are self-centered. The main point that everyone is concerned about is that we have the potential to have one of the top educational systems in the world and yet we are still on the decline.

To sum up, coming from Arendt’s claim that a crisis of education is a crisis of politics, especially in America, the questions were answered of: why is it so according to her? What does education have to do with politics beyond

providing elementary skills and job training? Why is it essential to politics and America? Why is the crisis most acute in America? Is she correct in her reasoning and why or why not?