

# Purposes of schooling essay sample

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## Introduction

John Locke had once declared that the mind is like a tablet which is a storehouse of all information and data. However, from the time of birth this tablet is blank and without any imprints on it. Among all the creatures in the Animal Kingdom man is perhaps the weakest and has the smallest chance of survival. Man does not have the strength of the lion nor the speed of a cheetah nor the sharp senses of a snake. Yet man is by far the most powerful force in the whole of Animal Kingdom. What gives man considerable advantage to the other creatures is his innate and uncanny ability to accumulate and store his knowledge. Man also has distinct ability to transfer this accumulated knowledge to the next generation.

Indeed, this ability to store knowledge and transfer them to the succeeding generation is a potent weapon which man has learned to use to his advantage. Man learned to utilize these skills and knowledge for him to survive. In the same manner, humanity will not be able to attain its present state without any device by which the culture and learning of the past can be transmitted to the next generation. Civilization will not likewise be attained if man will have to start from scratch and figure things out on his own.

It is this importance of transferring the learning from one generation to the next that is the basis of formal education. Education helps build bridges by which the culture and tradition of the past is transferred to the present.

(Doug Feldman, 2005, p. 11) Education therefore is very important not only for the continued survival of the human race but also for the improvement of our lives. Education not only benefits the individual himself but the society

as well (W. Craig Riddell, 2004, p. 1). It is said that education has also helped cause a major transformation in the American society. (Chara Haeussler Bohan, 2003, p. 74 ) It is because of this reason that the formal system of education was established.

Times have changed however. With the changes in our time, we turn to the schools to help us cope with the changing conditions. (Allan C. Ornstein and Daniel U. Levine, p. 410) History has shown that it is important that the system of education be made to adjust to the changing times to suit the demand of the present generation. The question that should be answered is whether our present system of education has responded to the challenge of the changing time. In a report entitled “ Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform” published by the National Commission on Excellence in Education, it found that mediocrity pervades the whole of our educational system and this rising tide of mediocrity in our system of education is eroding the whole nation.

This mediocrity found in our system of education has affected the other sectors of the society. (Allan Ornstein and Daniel Levine, p. 400) Research shows that despite the skyrocketing cost of education every year, the average achievement scores on the Scholastic Aptitude Test decline steadily from 1963 to 1990. (Allan Ornstein and Daniel Levine, 2002 p. 404) It is because of these reasons that there is a general trend among schools in the US that more students are dropping out of school while some never had the opportunity to enter schooling at all. Consider the case of Vermont which has experienced a decline in enrolment from a high of 105, 600 in 1996. It is

said that this trend will continue in Vermont until the student population has reached 92, 000. (Richard H. Cate, p. 8)

In answering the issue of whether the present system of education has adequately responded to the changing times, we must first re-examine the purpose of schools in the light of the present time and condition. Is it still necessary or is it only a waste of time, money and effort?

### Purposes of Schooling

The past systems of formal education have their strengths and weaknesses. But we cannot adopt their style today because the time has changed and so must our educational system should change if we want to remain competitive. It is therefore very important for the schools to adopt their needs to the demands of the society and the world.

According to Allan C. Ornstein and Daniel U. Levine (2002), “ History has shown that the US educational system has undergone a series of changes – from the perennialist theory which emphasized on the mental and cognitive aspect of education until the time of Industrial Revolution where the emphasis shifted from the mental aspect to the over-all development of the child which includes the child’s social, psychological, and civil development” (p. 406). During the mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century there was a return to the traditional approach of emphasizing academics. Despite these changes in the educational system the following purposes of education remains.

#### 1. Mental and Cognitive Development

Schools are geared towards the intellectual development of the young student. Schools help the young child learn about the basics of reading and writing. John Locke once said the mind is like a blank tablet from the moment a person is born. This tablet is like soft clay which is very receptive to new ideas. Locke however advised us that lessons are imprinted on this “tablet” if the other senses will be utilized more often. (Allan Ornstein and Daniel Levine, p. 136) Locke emphasized not to limit teaching to classroom discussions but to let the students experience and feel the subject matter of the lesson.

Jean Jacques Rousseau agreed and said that the eyes, ears, hands and feet are the first teachers and that the senses are better and far more efficient than the teacher. (Allan Ornstein and Daniel Levine, p. 137) This is the reason why teachers are encouraged to make use of other medium of instruction such as slide shows, documentary films, field trips, conduct of experiments and other activities which can assist students to learn for themselves. The theory here is learning cannot be attained by classroom discussions alone but by allowing students to experience the objects of study.

Locke, however, did not state that the classroom discussions should be totally abandoned. They are still effective because they help the student deal with different problems in the areas of grammar, mathematics, science, arts and literature, geography and history, which help exercise and strengthen the mind of the child. The traditional teaching should still be observed but it must not end there. It must be stressed that this intellectual

development should be geared towards preparing the child to higher education and to face the complexities of life.

It is because of this goal of achieving intellectual development of children that the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) was passed. (Allan Ornstein and David Levine, p. 403) The statute seeks to provide a state standard by which every child will be taught. It must be stressed that schools desire that every children reaches a particular level of intellectual development.

### 1. Responsive to Emotional Needs.

Children have emotional needs. It is possible that the parents of the child are preoccupied with their respective careers that the child may be experiencing emotional problems at home. It is also possible that the child may have abusive parents or that the parents have recently separated. This puts tremendous amount of emotional stress to the child which is a barrier to learning. Johann Pestalozzi stressed the importance of emotion in learning. (p. 139) He meant that learning presumes that the child is ready to actually learn and that there are no emotional or psychological barriers to learning. It is because of this reason that it is part of the responsibility of the teachers is to ensure that there are no hindrances to learning by determining which of the students may be undergoing emotional problems. It is also this reason why schools have counseling services which seek to address this problem.

### 1. Improve Communication Skills

One of the most important purposes of schools is to impart to the students the mastery of certain basic skills – the oral communication skills, written communication skills. Schools help in the improvement of oral and written

communication skills to prepare the students for higher education and for employment. Competitiveness in this constantly changing and evolving world requires that the students must at least have good communication skills. Employers often use communication skills as a way of determining whether they will hire an applicant or not.

### 1. Impart Technical Skills

Schooling seeks to prepare students not only for college but also for his future. (Chara Haeussler Bohan, 2003, p. 82) Globalization and the Internet Technology have caused serious changes in our world today. The world is much faster now than what it used to be and much more dependent on computers. It is the task of schools to prepare the students to this competitive and fast changing world by teaching them technical skills. This helps ensure that the country can adequately meet the demands of some high tech industries insofar as skilled workers are concerned. (Nicholas Barr, 1998 p. 2)

This is the utilitarian education that Herbert Spencer was referring to (p. 142). Spencer explained that the education must be directed towards the marketplace and strongly advocated technical and professional preparation based on science and engineering. (p. 412) This means that education must have practical value to the students by preparing them for a possible career after graduation.

The school helps equip the student with the necessary skills that will make him competitive in the corporate world. It bears stressing that students go

to schools so that one day they may be able to get decent jobs and earn good salaries.

Research shows that in 2003 alone, the average full-time year-round worker in the United States with a four-year college degree earned \$49, 900, 62 percent more than the \$30, 800 earned by the average full-time year-round worker with only a high school diploma. (Sandy Baum and Kathleen Payea, 2005, p. 14) Studies also show that those with master's degrees earned almost twice as much and those with professional degrees earned over three times as much per year as high school graduates. (Sandy Baum and Kathleen Payea, 2005, p. 14)

In an article entitled “ Against School”, the author argued that there is no reason for formal schooling since there have been great leaders and great inventors in the past who were successful yet did not have a formal schooling. He cited as examples Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, George Washing and Thomas Edison. The author has completely forgotten that having a formal education will better equip the child to face the complexities of life. It does not say that the road to success can only be reached through formal education but that formal education better equips the child to face the outside world and give him better chances of becoming a success.

### 1. Improvement of Social Interaction skills

Cultural diversity exists in schools and it is here that students first learn to appreciate cultural diversity. Schools are also important because here the child learns to interact with other children having different family, economic, <https://assignbuster.com/purposes-of-schooling-essay-sample/>



educational and social backgrounds. It may be true that home-schooled children are not necessarily deprived of socialization. (Eric Jacobs, 2007, p. 1) But it cannot be denied that it is at school that the child first learns that he is a part of a complex social structure.

It is also in school that he learns to interact with other children especially when there are classroom activities designed to be completed only after cooperation among the students. Here, the child will learn to work with each other and to cooperate with them to finish their task. Also, in school the child learns that there are other people outside of his own world who have a different culture from his. It makes him realize from the early period of his life about the existence of different culture and that he can learn from the other students.

It must be emphasized however that teachers nowadays are more sensitive to the cultural differences among students. Teachers have also learned to adjust their styles and techniques depending on the student. Studies show that teachers must be sensitive to the cultural differences among students otherwise they might misinterpret these differences as a sign of lack of motivation or lack of intelligence which seriously imperils learning. (Pascal Mubenga p. 12)

For example, research shows that African American students love to interact with other students and they love to work with groups. This will explain why the African American students lack interest in classroom activities which test the individual skills of the student. Consider also the case of Indian students who prefer to talk only when they wish to talk and usually responds to a

statement only after a considerable time has elapsed. It is the task of the teachers to be sensitive to these cultural differences so that they may be able to adjust their techniques to suit their differences.

### 1. Promotion of the Ideals of Democracy

Education also aims to impart to the students the importance of preserving the ideals of democracy. (John I. Goodlad, 2004, p. 1) The principles of truth, justice, fairness and equality are mental abstractions which have no clear meaning unless the students are exposed to them in a school setting. The environment at home is very much different from the environment at school where the children are given exercises where they have the opportunity to participate in simple activities designed to test the student's decision making skills.

Though the child's parents may be able to teach these concepts, it is only in an external environment that the child will fully understand and gain knowledge of these concepts. It is because of this reason that John Dewey advised that schools should provide the students with a liberating environment. (Allan Ornstein and Daniel Levine, p. 142) This only means that schools aside from the parents should allow the students to freely express their own ideas in the classroom.

### 1. Appreciation for the Arts

Mental and social skills alone do not make a well-rounded individual. Appreciation for aesthetics is also one of the purposes of education. (Allan Ornstein and David Levine, 2002, p. 397) It is because of this reason that appreciation for the arts is always included in the curriculum.

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It seeks to impart to the students how important the appreciation for the arts is. The teachers must make it a point that the students are able to visit museums and theaters. It is only by not limiting the child to the confines of his home that he will fully appreciate the aesthetics. Appreciation for beauty and the arts can only be attained by exposure to it. For example, the child will not be able to know whether his artwork is good and how he is progressing if there is no point of comparison.

### 1. Develop Ethical Character

A wide chasm exists between knowledge and wisdom. Knowledge is simply knowing things. Wisdom is knowing when to apply this knowledge for the goodness of humanity. Schools should not only strive to produce intelligent individuals but they must also strive to produce ethical and moral individuals. It is because of this reason that the practice of religion is to a certain extent tolerated in schools. Thus, activities such as organizing prayer groups or religious clubs are not prohibited in schools. (Allan C. Ornstein and David U. Levine, p. 281) Students are also given the freedom to freely express their views of a particular religion and the same should be respected by their teachers.

### 1. Develop Critical Thinking

Jerry Fluellen (1994) described a person who is a critical thinker, to wit; a) an ability to deeply question one's own framework of thought; b) an ability to reconstruct sympathetically and imaginatively the strongest versions of points of view and frameworks of thoughts opposed to one's own and c) an ability to reason dialectically in such a way as to determine when one's own

point of view is at its weakest and when an opposing point of view is at its strongest. (p. 7) The purpose of education is not only to study the thoughts of the past great thinkers but to be able to critically examine the foundations and basis of these thoughts. Schooling also trains students to be critical even of one's own point of view. Biases and prejudices pervade our whole society. Most of the time these people do not even know that they have these biases which are so powerful that they shape their lives. Schooling teaches us to be critical of the very basis of our own beliefs.

### 1. Special Education

Schools help individual with disabilities. (Allan Ornstein and David Levine, 2002, p. 402) Schools have more trained personnel and have expertise in handling children with disabilities such as autism, deaf-blindness, deafness, developmental delay, emotional disturbance, hearing impairment, and mental retardation. A child found to have learning disability needs the guidance of his parents. But the child also needs the experience of the school in handling these special conditions.

In view of the special condition of the child, the active involvement of the parent is not sufficient. An ordinary parent who has no training in dealing with children who have disabilities is not qualified to deal with this situation. Parents therefore need the help of well-trained professional who can assist them in determining whether the child really has disabilities and whether the child needs to enroll in special education. It not only involves the giving of special classes and instruction to the child but also psychological and counseling services to help develop and improve the child's condition.

## Conclusion

Any person who does not have access to quality education is a victim of injustice. Education is a basic right of every person. It does not matter whether the individual is under public or private education. Justice demands that everybody must be entitled to quality and accessible education. It is therefore the task of the government to ensure that the citizens are accorded these basic rights.

In providing every citizen with a quality and accessible education, it must be borne in mind that the past systems of education, though they may serve as lighthouse to guide the present and our future, may no longer be adopted in this age of Globalization and Internet Technology. The constantly changing world demands that the system of education adjust to these changes. In the past years, formal education has suffered decline but the new legislations and statutes calling for better and more stringent academic standard is sufficient to rectify the mistakes committed in the past and improve the system of education in our country.

I agree with the Progressive view of education. Education is not only a matter of knowing the facts and details of events and phenomena. It is also about teaching the students to be independent, developing a strong moral character, improving socialization, helping them to think critically. This research paper has sufficiently shown that despite the criticisms against formal education, the child's exposure to a formal education is still better for his over-all development. Schooling has personal benefits – complete

development of the child – and social development – the improvement of the society.

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