

25 Quotes That Accurately Represent The Problems With Our Education System

By Ayodeji Awosika, April 17th 2015



Waiting For Superman

I talk a lot about my problems with how our current education system is run today. The rigid guidelines it imposes on students, the killing of creativity and individualism, the lack of teaching in practical relevant areas of life, and the grading system that motivates students to learn and then subsequently forget information in order to receive proverbial gold stars, are a few among many issues I have with the system and the way it operates. Here is a list of quotes by people who speak much more eloquently than I can on the problems with our education system. This is simply me sharing these quotes so they can reach a larger audience and I take no credit for any of the information presented from here on out.

1.

“Schools are designed on the assumption that there is a secret to everything in life; that the quality of life depends upon knowing that secret; that secrets can only be known in orderly successions; and that only teachers can properly reveal these secrets. An individual with a schooled mind conceives of the world as a pyramid of classified packages accessible only to those who carry the proper tags.” – Ivan Illich
Schools are designed on the assumption that there is a secret to everything in life; that the quality of life depends upon knowing that secret; that secrets can only be known in orderly successions; and that only teachers can properly reveal these secrets. An individual with a schooled mind conceives of the world as a pyramid of classified packages accessible only to those who carry the proper tags.” – *Ivan Illich*

2.

“Our rapidly moving, information-based society badly needs people who know how to find facts rather than memorize them, and who know how to cope with change in creative ways. You don’t learn those things in school.” – *Wendy Priesnitz*

3.

“Education is what remains after one has forgotten everything he learned in school. It is a miracle that curiosity survives formal education.” – *Albert Einstein*

4.

We destroy the disinterested (I do not mean uninterested) love of learning in children, which is so strong when they are small, by encouraging and compelling them to work for petty and contemptible rewards — gold stars, or papers marked 100 and tacked to the wall, or A’s on report cards... in short, for the ignoble satisfaction of feeling that they are better than someone else.... We kill, not only their curiosity, but their feeling that it is a good and admirable thing to be curious, so that by the age of ten most of them will not ask questions, and will show a good deal of scorn for the few who do. – *John Holt, How Children Fail*

5.

“There were no sex classes. No friendship classes. No classes on how to navigate a bureaucracy, build an organization, raise money, create a database, buy a house, love a child, spot a scam, talk someone out of suicide, or figure out what was important to me. Not knowing how to do these things is what messes people up in life, not whether they know algebra or can analyze literature.” – *William Upsi Wimsatt*

6.

Believe nothing merely because you have been told it . . . or because it is tradition, or because you yourselves have imagined it. Do not believe what your teacher tells you merely out of respect for the teacher. But whatsoever, after due examination and analysis, you find to be conducive to the good, the benefit, the welfare of all beings – that doctrine believe and cling to, and take it as your guide. – *Gautama Buddha*

7.

“Nothing bothers me more than when people criticize my criticism of school by telling me that schools are not just places to learn maths and spelling, they are places where children learn a vaguely defined thing called socialization. I know. I think schools generally do an effective and terribly damaging job of teaching children to be infantile, dependent, intellectually dishonest, passive and disrespectful to their own developmental capacities.” – *Seymour Papert*

8.

“The condition of alienation, of being asleep, of being unconscious, of being out of one’s mind, is the condition of the normal man. Society highly values its normal man. It educates children to lose themselves and to become absurd, and thus to be normal.” – *R.D. Laing*

9.

“The function of high school, then, is not so much to communicate knowledge as to oblige children finally to accept the grading system as a measure of their inner excellence. And a function of the self-destructive process in American children is to make them willing to accept not their own, but a variety of other standards, like a grading system, for measuring themselves. It is thus apparent that the way American culture is now integrated it would fall apart if it did not engender feelings of inferiority and worthlessness.” – *Jules Henry*

10.

Everybody is a genius. But if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will spend its whole life believing that it is stupid.” – *Albert Einstein*

11.

“There is no neutral education. Education is either for domestication or for freedom.” – *Joao Coutinho*

12.

“If we taught babies to talk as most skills are taught in school, they would memorize lists of sounds in a predetermined order and practice them alone in a closet.” *Linda Darling-Hammond*

13.

Education itself is a putting off, a postponement; we are told to work hard to get good results. Why? So we can get a good job. What is a good job? One that pays well. Oh. And that's it? All this suffering, merely so that we can earn a lot of money, which, even if we manage it, will not solve our problems anyway? It's a tragically limited idea of what life is all about.” – *Tom Hodgkinson*

14.

“Learning is not the product of teaching. Learning is the product of the activity of learners.” – *John Holt*

15.

“Public education reflects our society’s paternalistic, hierarchical worldview, which exploits children in the same way it takes the earth’s resources for granted.” – *Wendy Priesnitz*

16.

“The whole educational and professional training system is a very elaborate filter, which just weeds out people who are too independent, and who think for themselves, and who don’t know how to be submissive, and so on – because they’re dysfunctional to the institutions.” ~ *Noam Chomsky*

17.

What is the purpose of industrial education? To fill the young of the species with knowledge and awaken their intelligence? Nothing could be further from the truth. The aim is simply to reduce as many individuals as possible to the same safe level, to breed and train a standardized citizenry, to put down dissent and originality. That is its aim in the United States and that is its aim everywhere else. – *H. L. Mencken*

18.

“I’ve concluded that genius is as common as dirt. We suppress our genius only because we haven’t yet figured out how to manage a population of educated men and women. The solution, I think, is simple and glorious. Let them manage themselves.” – *John Taylor Gatto*

19.

“The anxiety children feel at constantly being tested, their fear of failure, punishment, and disgrace, severely reduces their ability both to perceive and to remember, and drives them away from the material being studied into strategies for fooling teachers into thinking they know what they really don’t know.” – *John Holt*

20.

“Traditional education focuses on teaching, not learning. It incorrectly assumes that for every ounce of teaching there is an ounce of learning by those who are taught. However, most of what we learn before, during, and after attending schools is learned without its being taught to us. A child learns such fundamental things as how to walk, talk, eat, dress, and so on without being taught these things. Adults learn most of what they use at work or at leisure while at work or leisure. Most of what is taught in classroom settings is forgotten, and much of what is remembered is irrelevant.” – *Russell Ackoff in The Objective of Education Is Learning, Not Teaching*

21.

“I am beginning to suspect all elaborate and special systems of education. They seem to me to be built upon the supposition that every child is a kind of idiot who must be taught to think. Whereas, if the child is left to himself, he will think more and better, if less showily. Let him go and come freely, let him touch real things and combine his impressions for himself, instead of sitting indoors at a little round table, while a sweet-voiced teacher suggests that he build a stone wall with his wooden blocks, or make a rainbow out of strips of coloured paper, or plant straw trees in bead flower-pots. Such teaching fills the mind with artificial associations that must be got rid of, before the child can develop independent ideas out of actual experience.” – *Anne Sullivan, Helen Keller’s Teacher*

22.

“Our large schools are organized like a factory of the late 19th century: top down, command control management, a system designed to stifle creativity and independent judgment.” – *David T Kearns, CEO Xerox*

23.

“Do not train children in learning by force and harshness, but direct them to it by what amuses their minds, so that you may be better able to discover with accuracy the peculiar bent of the genius of each.” – *Plato*

24.

“Self-education is, I firmly believe, the only kind of education there is.” –
Isaac Asimov

25.

“I am concerned that too many people are focused too much on money and not on their greatest wealth, which is their education. If people are prepared to be flexible, keep an open mind and learn, they will grow richer and richer through the changes. If they think money will solve the problems, I am afraid those people will have a rough ride. Intelligence solves problems and produces money. Money without financial intelligence is money soon gone.”
~ *Robert Kiyosaki*