Concept of Education

Education is the process of facilitating learning, or the acquisition of knowledge, skills, values, beliefs, and habits. Educational methods include storytelling, discussion, teaching, training, and directed research. Education frequently takes place under the guidance of educators, but learners may also educate themselves. Education can take place in formal or informal settings and any experience that has a formative effect on the way one thinks, feels, or acts may be considered educational. The methodology of teaching is called pedagogy.

Education is commonly divided formally into such stages as preschool or kindergarten, primary school, secondary school and then college, university, or apprenticeship.

ETYMOLOGY

Etymologically, the word “education” is derived from the Latin ċducātiō (“A breeding, a bringing up, a rearing”) from ċducō (“I educate, I train”) which is related to the homonym ċducible (“I lead forth, I take out; I raise up, I erect”) from ċ- (“from, out of”) and dúćō (“I lead, I conduct”).

HISTORY

Education began in prehistory, as adults trained the young in the knowledge and skills deemed necessary in their society. In pre-literate societies, this was achieved orally and through imitation. Story-telling passed knowledge, values, and skills from one generation to the next. As cultures began to extend their knowledge
beyond skills that could be readily learned through imitation, formal education developed. Schools existed in Egypt at the time of the Middle Kingdom.

Plato founded the Academy in Athens, the first institution of higher learning in Europe. The city of Alexandria in Egypt, established in 330 BCE, became the successor to Athens as the intellectual cradle of Ancient Greece. There, the great Library of Alexandria was built in the 3rd century BCE. European civilizations suffered a collapse of literacy and organization following the fall of Rome in CE 476.

In China, Confucius (551–479 BCE), of the State of Lu, was the country’s most influential ancient philosopher, whose educational outlook continues to influence the societies of China and neighbours like Korea, Japan, and Vietnam. Confucius gathered disciples and searched in vain for a ruler who would adopt his ideals for good governance, but his Analects were written down by followers and have continued to influence education in East Asia into the modern era.

After the Fall of Rome, the Catholic Church became the sole preserver of literate scholarship in Western Europe. The church established cathedral schools in the Early Middle Ages as centres of advanced education. Some of these establishments ultimately evolved into medieval universities and forebears of many of Europe’s modern universities. During the High Middle Ages, Chartres Cathedral operated the famous and influential Chartres Cathedral School. The medieval universities of Western Christendom were well-integrated across all of Western Europe, encouraged freedom of inquiry, and produced a great variety of fine scholars and natural philosophers, including Thomas Aquinas of the University of Naples, Robert Grosseteste of the University of Oxford, an early expositor of a systematic method of scientific experimentation, and Saint Albert the Great, a pioneer of biological field research. Founded in 1088, the University of Bologne is considered the first, and the oldest continually operating university.

Elsewhere during the Middle Ages, Islamic science and mathematics flourished under the Islamic caliphate which was established across the Middle East, extending from the Iberian Peninsula in the west to the Indus in the east and to the Almoravid Dynasty and Mali Empire in the south.

The Renaissance in Europe ushered in a new age of scientific and intellectual inquiry and appreciation of ancient Greek and
Roman civilizations. Around 1450, Johannes Gutenberg developed a printing press, which allowed works of literature to spread more quickly. The European Age of Empires saw European ideas of education in philosophy, religion, arts and sciences spread out across the globe. Missionaries and scholars also brought back new ideas from other civilizations – as with the Jesuit China missions who played a significant role in the transmission of knowledge, science, and culture between China and Europe, translating works from Europe like Euclid’s Elements for Chinese scholars and the thoughts of Confucius for European audiences. The Enlightenment saw the emergence of a more secular educational outlook in Europe.

In most countries today, full-time education, whether at school or otherwise, is compulsory for all children up to a certain age. Due to this the proliferation of compulsory education, combined with population growth, UNESCO has calculated that in the next 30 years more people will receive formal education than in all of human history thus far.

**FORMAL EDUCATION**

Formal education occurs in a structured environment whose explicit purpose is teaching students. Usually, formal education takes place in a school environment with classrooms of multiple students learning together with a trained, certified teacher of the subject. Most school systems are designed around a set of values or ideals that govern all educational choices in that system. Such choices include curriculum, organizational models, design of the physical learning spaces (e.g. classrooms), student-teacher interactions, methods of assessment, class size, educational activities, and more.

**PRESCHOOL**

Preschools provide education from ages approximately three to seven, depending on the country when children enter primary education. These are also known as nursery schools and as kindergarten, except in the US, where kindergarten is a term used for primary education. Kindergarten “provide[s] a child-centred, preschool curriculum for three- to seven-year-old children that aim[s] at unfolding the child’s physical, intellectual, and moral nature with balanced emphasis on each of them.”
PRIMARY

Primary (or elementary) education consists of the first five to seven years of formal, structured education. In general, primary education consists of six to eight years of schooling starting at the age of five or six, although this varies between, and sometimes within, countries. Globally, around 89% of children aged six to twelve are enrolled in primary education, and this proportion is rising. Under the Education For All programs driven by UNESCO, most countries have committed to achieving universal enrollment in primary education by 2015, and in many countries, it is compulsory. The division between primary and secondary education is somewhat arbitrary, but it generally occurs at about eleven or twelve years of age. Some education systems have separate middle schools, with the transition to the final stage of secondary education taking place at around the age of fourteen. Schools that provide primary education, are mostly referred to as primary schools or elementary schools. Primary schools are often subdivided into infant schools and junior school.

In India, for example, compulsory education spans over twelve years, with eight years of elementary education, five years of primary schooling and three years of upper primary schooling. Various states in the republic of India provide 12 years of compulsory school education based on a national curriculum framework designed by the National Council of Educational Research and Training.

SECONDARY

In most contemporary educational systems of the world, secondary education comprises the formal education that occurs during adolescence. It is characterized by transition from the typically compulsory, comprehensive primary education for minors, to the optional, selective tertiary, “postsecondary”, or “higher” education (e.g. university, vocational school) for adults. Depending on the system, schools for this period, or a part of it, may be called secondary or high schools, gymnasiums, lyceums, middle schools, colleges, or vocational schools. The exact meaning of any of these terms varies from one system to another. The exact boundary between primary and secondary education also varies from country to country and even within them but is generally around the seventh to the tenth year of schooling. Secondary education occurs mainly during the teenage years. In the United States, Canada, and Australia,
primary and secondary education together are sometimes referred to as K-12 education, and in New Zealand Year 1–13 is used. The purpose of secondary education can be to give common knowledge, to prepare for higher education, or to train directly in a profession.

Secondary education in the United States did not emerge until 1910, with the rise of large corporations and advancing technology in factories, which required skilled workers. In order to meet this new job demand, high schools were created, with a curriculum focused on practical job skills that would better prepare students for white collar or skilled blue collar work. This proved beneficial for both employers and employees, since the improved human capital lowered costs for the employer, while skilled employees received higher wages.

Secondary education has a longer history in Europe, where grammar schools or academies date from as early as the 16th century, in the form of public schools, fee-paying schools, or charitable educational foundations, which themselves date even further back.

Community colleges offer another option at this transitional stage of education. They provide nonresidential junior college courses to people living in a particular area.

**TERTIARY (HIGHER)**

Higher education, also called tertiary, third stage, or postsecondary education, is the non-compulsory educational level that follows the completion of a school such as a high school or secondary school. Tertiary education is normally taken to include undergraduate and postgraduate education, as well as vocational education and training. Colleges and universities mainly provide tertiary education. Collectively, these are sometimes known as tertiary institutions. Individuals who complete tertiary education generally receive certificates, diplomas, or academic degrees.

Higher education typically involves work towards a degree-level or foundation degree qualification. In most developed countries, a high proportion of the population (up to 50%) now enter higher education at some time in their lives. Higher education is therefore very important to national economies, both as a significant industry in its own right and as a source of trained and educated personnel for the rest of the economy.