



Know the
basics in
90 minutes

Quicklook at **Education**



About Quicklook at Education

EDUCATION equips people for life. It takes many forms. Vital in our early years, it continues to ripe old age.

Quicklook at Education covers all of the main aspects of this hugely important subject. It explains how people learn and the ideas behind the ways in which they are taught.

There have been many changes over the years. The book explains how education has developed and the different roles played by state and private sector institutions. The education sector represents a huge part of the national economy and is a major employer. The way in which it operates is of immense significance and political interest. As a result it is always controversial and almost never settled. Major new changes are currently taking place.

The book explains the many different levels of the education system, from pre-school to top level degree courses. It shows how they relate to each other and covers the many options which exist outside schools and colleges. The complex system of qualifications and the associated exams and tests are clearly dealt with.

There are many different types of school. Some have existed for hundreds of years. Some new types of school have been formed in the last few months.

We learn how teachers and university staff receive their own training and the many paths into the teaching profession.



Quicklook at

Education

Alan Pritchard



Quicklook
books

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What is education?



EDUCATION comprises any actions or experiences which have formative effects on the individual. People learn throughout their lives.

Formal education is the means by which a society passes on what it considers to be of value in a deliberate fashion. That is the accumulated knowledge, skills and values regarded as important enough to be systematically passed from one generation to the next. The content of formal education makes up what is referred to as the curriculum. This is decided in a cultural context. In some cases it may be constructed centrally by government. Its make up can be contentious. Political, religious, and other viewpoints are likely to influence what is included, especially in countries where the government takes close control of the system of education, such as the United Kingdom.

The Importance of Education

Education equips people for the challenges of life. Without it their development is likely to be stunted in a great many ways. The ability to read, for example, opens up a wonderful way of accessing information that is of great value.

Education systems

In the UK the formal education sector employs over 800,000 people, including teachers, teaching assistants, admin and other support staff and has an annual budget of almost £90 billion, which was approximately 12% of total government spending in 2010. All governments invest in education. As a proportion of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) there is great variation, however. To look at the two extremes, Cuba spends 18.7%

of GDP compared with Ecuador where 1% of GDP is spent. The UK spends 5.4%, which is just below the USA which spends 5.7%.

It is interesting to consider education in terms of its economic value to the country. In many ways the most important effects are hard to measure. It is generally thought that having a well educated population encourages economic growth and prosperity. It is hard to judge whether and to what extent changes in education spending affect economic outcomes. Education is often a long term investment. It may take many years for the benefits of improvements to show through in the working environment. The people may be educated but there may be a shortage of jobs.

Education as a business

Although most UK education consists of free or heavily subsidised teaching funded by the taxpayer, it is important to remember that education itself represents a significant business sector. The figure relating to Higher Education— principally the universities, is striking: the total export earnings from it are approximately £5.3 billion. This includes income from research, consultancy services, teaching (in the form of tuition fee income) conference business, spending by international students and international visitors (who spend money away from the universities as well as in them) and an estimated £135 million spend off-campus by international visitors (a version of business tourism).

Most UK students now pay at least some of the cost of their university education, often borrowing the money from the government in order to do so. This means “business” for the universities: those who attract most students will be most likely to thrive.

About 7% of school pupils attend fee paying schools. This is another part of the “business” component of education. Where the students come from abroad, it is a source of foreign earnings. Some well known British private schools have developed offshoots abroad: another source of business.

Some argue that there is considerable scope for expanding fee paying services to people from other countries, in view of the good reputation of many institutions and the popularity of the English language. Others are

concerned that too much attention to the money making involved could create unwelcome distortions.

Formal Education

Formal education in developed countries involves a system of schools and colleges; each designed for a particular age range, staffed by professional, trained teachers. The United Nations tells us that there is some form of compulsory education in almost all countries of the world. There is usually a prescribed curriculum, but in some cases this is restricted to literacy and numeracy.

The most common formal education is very much like the system in the United Kingdom. There are schools for very young children and different schools for slightly older children. Others, generally referred to as secondary schools, usually cater for pupils aged from eleven to sixteen. At present, UK compulsory education stops at the age of sixteen. However, pupils can stay at school beyond this age and progress from there to “Higher Education”.

Formal education requires a formal setting, such as a school and a group of trained providers: teachers. An advanced system requires a large infrastructure in the form of schools, colleges, universities, training establishments for teachers and the extensive facilities which they all contain.

Informal Education

Informal education is as important as formal education. It starts at birth and continues throughout life. It is unplanned, happens all of the time, sometimes haphazardly, and forms much of what we understand of the world around us.

We often learn things without consciously seeking to do so. The rules of games can be picked up by observing and taking part, rather than being taught by someone in the formal role of teacher. More impressively perhaps, we learn to walk and talk by imitation, by trial and error and by the informal encouragement of those around us. Self motivation is important to informal learning. We want to play the game, we want to communicate, we want to do as we see others doing and this drives us on.

What is learning?



Knowledge, Concepts, Skills and Attitudes

IT is fairly widely agreed that there are four elements which make up learning. They are knowledge, concepts, skills and attitudes. Their development, or lack of it, shape individuals and greatly influence their path through life.

Learning

Below is a sample list of definitions of learning. There are many different ideas and theories. It is generally supposed that learning is either the process of gaining more knowledge (accumulating facts) or of learning how to do something (acquiring skills). The ability to understand perhaps involves a combination of or development of the two.

Behaviour Modification

This is a change in behaviour as a result of experience or practice. It can be a process by which behaviour is changed, shaped or controlled.

Knowledge Acquisition

This results in a measurable increase in knowledge. In other words, storing information that can be recalled and reproduced. This is very much easier for some people than others. There are techniques which can be used to improve memory. Teachers often focus on these: for example, actually doing something with information rather than simply reading or listening.

Developing Understanding

It is generally accepted that understanding is at the heart of the edu-

About the author

ALAN PRITCHARD has worked in education for over thirty years. Until recently he was Associate Professor of Education at Warwick University. He has published many books has written articles for the academic and professional press and has spoken at educational conferences around the world.

After a fairly happy time at school, where he did more or less the minimum amount of work needed to keep the teachers off his back, Alan left with little idea of what to do next. He worked for a while with children in care in a Liverpool children's home before training as a teacher. He worked as a primary school teacher – which he took to like a duck to water – and quickly became involved in the first round of the introduction of computers into schools in the early 1980s. His interest in learning and the ways in which new technology can make a positive impact on how and what children learn led him into new areas of work.

Before becoming a deputy head he was seconded for two years to a team of advisors who introduced teachers to the then new and mysterious ways of computers and their potential as tools for teaching. Moving to an academic career, he has taught a wide range of programmes in a university education department where teachers are trained. Higher level teaching and doctoral supervision form the mainstay of his work.

Alan has been involved in many funded research projects, both at home and abroad, spoken at educational conferences all over the world, and spent time as a visiting scholar in Australia. He has held several educational consultancies, including City Technology Colleges and children's television. He is the author of several books based on his research into learning in general, and his specialist research into the effective use of the Internet and related technologies for educational purposes.

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Medicine provides more and more remedies, often vital to life. What is becoming possible? How is it done? How does the body work? Find out about the medical professions. Be a GP for a day.

Quicklook at Law

English Law has spread its influence to many countries. Why? How does it work? How is it changing? How does the legal profession operate? Get inside a Court case.

Quicklook at **Education**

This astonishingly comprehensive book covers education from pre-school to top level degree courses. It explains how people learn and the ideas on which teaching is based. We consider how teachers and university staff themselves train and qualify.

The many different levels within education and the bewildering range of qualifications offered are clearly explained. There are many options outside the school and college system.

● This book looks at different types of education establishment, from the ancient to the very new.

About the author

Alan Pritchard has worked in education for over 30 years. He was Associate Professor of Education at Warwick University,



where, among other things, teachers are trained. Earlier in his career he worked as a teacher – rising to deputy head, before concentrating on his academic work.

Alan has published many books and articles on education and regularly speaks at conferences around the world. He is particularly interested in the use of modern technology within the education system.

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