

Chomsky on Education

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The work of Noam Chomsky, professor emeritus at the MIT, a linguist, philosopher, cognitive scientist, political activist and social critic, also provides valuable material for the analysis of his views on (mis)education. In the article, we present Chomsky's views on the purpose of education, good teaching, standardised testing, education reforms, inquiry as a key classroom activity, the role of information technology, critical thinking, rote learning practices of many contemporary education systems, and indoctrination.

According to Chomsky, good education is liberal and liberating. It touches on the full range of human endeavours, experiences and potentialities; thus, it is important to provide the richest and challenging environment for students at all levels of education. In his writing, Chomsky shows strong commitment to notions of academic freedom and a belief that universities have responsibility for the moral conscience of a society. Above all, the primary goal of education is to elicit and fortify whatever creative impulse a student may possess.

For Chomsky, the highest goal in life is to inquire and create, to internalize the parts that are significant for a learner. In this context, the purpose of education is to help students determine how to learn on their own. If we want to have a society of free, creative, independent individuals, educational systems should be geared towards encouraging active exploration, independence of thought and a willingness to challenge accepted beliefs.

Chomsky's writing and interviews provide a penetrating insight on how schools in many environments miseducate students. Latest wave of test-driven education reforms is too often the result of oversimplified conceptions of problems schools face. This article offers an introduction to Chomsky's writing/talks about education, which are by any measure the work of an independent and critical mind, which deserves the audience of educators, policy makers and parents.

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