

Sample Argumentative Essay
Skills vs. Knowledge in Education
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Introduction

Main Idea One: The Other Side – Learning Information is needed for tests

- a) Tests are the best way to compare students
- b) Tests measure if you understand something
- c) Not all students can have the same skills, but all can have the same knowledge

Main Idea Two: My Side 1 – Education is about understanding

- a) Knowledge is limited, but imagination encircles the world (creativity)
- b) Knowledge is what other people think about something, but understanding is what you think.
- c) Everybody sees, hears, feels, and thinks differently, so each person will have a different understanding of the same thing.

Main Idea Three: My Side 2 – Skills are more important in the real world

- a) Finding information
- b) Organizing information
- c) Analyzing information
- d) Synthesizing information
- e) Creating new information

Conclusion

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Academic Writing
January 12th, 2010

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Education systems all over the world are based on the idea that students get and remember information from teachers and books. These systems test this knowledge with standardized tests which compare students to each-other. They only test the kind of information which is possible to measure in tests. The goal is gaining information, not developing skills by which to use and make information. Unlike the old style of education where people remembered things in order to pass tests and get higher scores than other students, the modern world calls for a new kind of education in which the focus is deep understanding, creativity, and information management skills.

Most education systems in the world are designed to make students remember things. One reason is that schools feel the need to compare students. They do this by giving tests. They want to be able to give grades and decide which students are smart and which are not. They function as a sorting mechanism for society. From the earliest grades, students are put on tracks that will decide their futures. Another reason schools like to make students remember things is that by doing so they will be able to test their knowledge and determine if they remember or not. They believe that if students remember things it is the same as understanding those things. Schools also like to impart knowledge because in this way, although students can have different individual skills, they can all have the same knowledge.

Einstein said “Imagination is more important than knowledge. Knowledge is limited. Imagination encircles the world” (Needle, 2007). All the knowledge in the world is useless unless you are able to use information in creative ways. Knowledge is what other people have

created. Understanding is all about what you think about something. Everybody sees, hears, feels, and thinks differently. No two people in the world have the same understanding of the same thing. It is impossible to give tests on a point of view. Because of this, tests are illogical. The only reason tests exist is to label students as “smart” or “stupid.” There are many kinds of intelligence, however. One of the most famous researchers in the field of intelligence, Gardner, found at least seven different kinds of intelligence (Gardner, 1999). Intelligence and understanding are related. Unfortunately, tests only measure one type of intelligence.

In the modern world skills are more important than knowledge. If a person knows many facts, it is impressive, but not very useful. It is of much greater importance to be able to find information quickly, organize that information, analyze and understand the main ideas, put different pieces of information together (synthesize), and create new information. Together these skills make what we call information management and innovation, the skills which are most desired in the business world.

Most people in the world believe that education is about remembering things to take tests which measure one’s performance against other people who have studied the same information. However, this idea no longer matches the reality of the modern world in which knowledge is less important than creativity and deep understanding. To be successful in the age of technology, education must focus on helping students gain information management and innovation skills.

Sources Cited

Gardner, H. (1999). *Intelligence reframed: Multiple intelligences for the 21st century*. New York, NY: Basic Books.

Needle, Andrew, et al. (2007). Combining art and science in 'arts and sciences' education. *College Teaching* 55.3