

**‘A person who needs to have  
patience as a teacher is a poor  
thing. He should have love and joy.’**

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Did the jigsaw pieces build up into a picture? The picture of a school that has freed itself from the many constraints which come from the countless political measures seen as absolutely necessary? The picture of a school in which learning is a pleasure and teaching is a pleasure? A school in which human beings — teachers and pupils — can become involved in their own distinctive individuality? A school which has made Pestalozzi's 'educated humanity' its ultimate goal?

There is much that could still be said: on the marking system, on the teaching of individual subjects and on fashions in teaching theory, on learning foreign languages in a way that is appropriate for children, on the development of teachers' and pupils' creativity, on the problem of handwriting, on the importance of music in schools, on dealing with children who are non-native speakers, on working together with parents, on the authorities' relationship with teachers, on the problems of part-time teachers, on the lack of male teachers in primary schools, on education vouchers, that would allow private institutions also to cater for the less well-off.

But enough is enough. One thing is certain, however: a good school can only exist with good, motivated and also talented teachers. If those in charge of educational policy believe there is a shortage of such teachers and therefore organise education in such a way that it can operate without good teachers, they are going down the wrong road. What they ought to be asking themselves is what must be done to ensure that schools get the teachers they need. But the state will not get better

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teachers with a teacher-training system that is organised on mechanical lines and puts its main emphasis on acquiring knowledge. It will not get better teachers if it clings to the belief that the teaching profession is just like any other and that everything that is necessary for it can be 'delivered' in teacher training and in-service courses. And it will not get better teachers if it keeps them on an even tighter rein and marks them according to some assessment system, giving points for ticking this or that box, and even makes salary levels or special bonuses dependent on it.

I believe using such measures to try and motivate teachers to improve their work is the wrong way. A bricklayer's performance can be measured: how long and how high is the piece of wall he has done today? But a teacher's performance cannot be measured. A true teacher is like a farmer scattering his seed over a long, narrow field, marching on and never looking back. He knows, as he carries on with his task, that much of what he is sowing will only come up after years, or even decades. Anyone who wants their work as a teacher to bear fruit should not court success or want to reap the rewards.

For what is success for a teacher? To be applauded? That is easily achieved by currying favour with the right people. To be well liked? You just have to say what people want to hear. To get good results in tests and exams? That is certainly important if it's done in the right spirit. But one can neglect many things that are important in order to spend more time drilling the class in what the pupils need to know for tests and exams.

Or do we call success getting a class through the year with no serious conflicts? Perhaps the teacher was lucky, or the worst cases were given to a colleague who had stronger nerves. Or he did not face up to problems because he did not want to disturb the superficial harmony.

Who can measure the performance of a teacher who takes the time to learn a poem off by heart before dealing with it in class? Of a teacher who is not satisfied with the material in the text book and spends days reading up on a topic? Who can measure the performance of a teacher who remains silent at a staff meeting, when a pupil's catalogue of misdeeds is being discussed, because he knows that otherwise he would lose the trust of the problem pupil?

And what about the performance of the teacher who pays for a course of psychotherapy out of his own funds to help him come to terms

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with his difficulties with certain children? Should he shout it from the rooftops to build up the points in his account? And what about the teacher who always senses the right moment to let drop a remark about important questions or fundamental values — off the cuff, unspectacular, but full of commitment, and effective? Should he note it down and stick it under his head of department's nose? Perhaps what he said will only take effect when his pupils are already going grey.

The spread of the points systems tempts teachers to put their work in the public eye and to make a show of things that should remain hidden. The things one can show become the things that are important. It stirs up jealousy, encourages conformism and undermines the sense of community. And the insistence on teamwork that has been forced on us is no compensation for that.

I am a realist and I know that there are also poor teachers, people who do not accept the responsibility and do not carry out their obligations satisfactorily. In such cases it is the duty of their head teachers to deal with the problem of the failing teacher. But for that there is no need of a system of qualifications or bonuses, which robs all the teachers, even the creative and responsible ones, of their independence, implying that they would be motivated to perform better by such a ridiculous points system. A teacher who has a vocation knows himself what he owes the pupils and does not have to be driven by the stick and carrot.

Let us finish by listening to Pestalozzi. As was usual at his time, he only speaks of men, but I have allowed myself to adapt it to the demands of the present day:

*'One thing is needed and that is good schoolmasters and mistresses. Where they are absent, all the rest of the business of education in the land is a waste of time, so much dust to blind the men and women who do not want to see what they lack. Anyone, therefore, who really wants schools that will give the people a good education must above all set their hand to providing what is sorely needed, namely that all over the country there are men and women who are willing and able to educate and guide young people with insight and love so that they gain the wisdom they need for life and the strength and order they need for their station and their situation in life.'*