

## **Teachers and teaching**

Teaching is becoming a very complicated business today and the term good, as applied to teachers, now has a very different meaning from what it used to have a few decades ago. Then was the time when school was the source of all knowledge. Even parents would say to kids, “asks your teacher”. The latter had authority and was consequently entitled to respect. Today, we all get our data at the same time and the pace at which it comes is mind-boggling, confusing, even frightening.

Teachers in the past could rightly assume that students sitting before them were ready to learn. Today, many children in class are too tired, too hungry, too upset by the circumstances of their lives, too distracted by the beasts (television, Internet, mobile phone, etc.) that devour their attention and interest. Teachers cannot afford to turn a blind eye to what their students bring to class.

Thus the formal teacher with the “you-do-it-or-else” attitude is less likely to succeed if he has not first made his learners feel that he needs them as much as they need him. Many teachers feel that their mastery of the subject should be reason enough for students to be subdued. This is an erroneous and dangerous stance, which is not conducive to interactive relations. It closes them in an ivory tower from where it becomes impossible to meet the deeper human need of the child to feel cared about. Today more than ever, the child craves for caring and recognition. Large schools run on the industrial model of input of raw materials, processing and output of finished goods do not reckon with this. That is why modern day research in pedagogy points to the necessity of humanising schools and making them smaller and more personalized in the process.

Indeed, there is a lot of cajoling and persuading that teachers need to do. Whatever they are called upon to teach, they first have to make clear the relevance of the subject to the student’s life. When so many other things are competing for children’s interest, teachers have to ‘sell’ their subject through known marketing techniques and by displaying enthusiasm and conviction. Today, we know so much about the brain, multiple intelligence and the different ways of reaching different children. It is therefore downright absurd to expect all learners to tune in to an

exhausting lecture, which sadly enough often leaves the learning partners out of the learning experience. Innovation must be a constant preoccupation, almost an obsession for the teacher. The work must be planned in such a way that the responsibility for completing the syllabus is borne by all stakeholders, with the help of information and communication technologies. Some room, marginal at first, should be made for the participation of parents as well. The classroom must become a place for active experimentation. Each school, with its own specificity, must generate its own ideas. At the end of the day, values that should rank high among good teachers should be openness, honesty and readiness to learn from each other, be it from juniors.