



Mental Health and Schooling

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Editorial

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Editorial

A problem in much of today's western schooling is that it pays little, if any, attention to personal care [1]. The primary concern tends to be success in examinations as an avenue to higher education or the job market [2]. While few would disagree that schooling needs to prepare people for the world of work. More is needed.

Educators for long also emphasized that education ought to be for life. If so, the school needs to review what it presents as education. It needs to address the person in his/her historicity [3,4]. Joan, (not her real name) a student who had emotional difficulties in a faith-based secondary school was reprimanded and humiliated repeatedly by her teachers for poor classroom performance. This exacerbated Joan's struggles and so her parents arranged that she would move to a public comprehensive school. There, she relates that she was addressed as a person where teachers and administrators welcomed her and viewed her classroom work in the context of her emotional health, treating her with care and compassion. Over a year, she found herself better fitted to face her studies and her life. Today, many years later, she has a responsible job and is able to live independently and self-confidently. She, however, remains critical of the way she was treated at the Catholic school which prides itself almost entirely in gaining good academic outcomes.

In many settings, it is true that the school is under great pressure from parents, students, and education departments to deliver well academically. This has its place but the school ought never forget that behind each face is a person who needs to be guided and given the resources to enable him/her to live a respectable life. Above all, it should avoid graduating people without conscience who go on to cheat, abuse, and murder [5,6]. Whatever else, education ought to keep in view the well-being of people [7].

With vision and good will, it should not be impossible to combine educating for life and for work but this challenges those responsible to decision. It does not necessarily mean choosing between education for work or education for life. Neither does it necessarily entail some 'add-on' courses in philosophy or humanities in what often is already crowded curriculum. It can take the form of expanding the subjects from within. In teaching science for instance, it can mean going to the limits of scientific discovery and then coming to human concern by pointing to the origin of it all [8]. It means providing a larger horizon, where human issues can be addressed.

Teachers will of course object that they are employed to teach physics or maths and not to be counselors. If that is the view he/she has of teaching, it is surely deplorably limited. Perhaps, she/he needs another way of life. At the end of the day, year, or years, the school needs to graduate healthy-minded men and women, not misfits or robots.

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