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## SOME THOUGHTS AROUND THE PRINCIPLE OF THE FREEDOM TO TEACH

*У статті розглядається проблема свободи навчання як важливого елемента освітньої системи. Автор звертає увагу на той факт, що держава прагне інструктувати та централізувати в той час як молоді науковці досить часто опираються таким інструкціям.*

**Ключові слова:** *система освіти, свобода навчання, централізація, стандартизація.*

*В статье рассматривается проблема свободы обучения как важного элемента образовательной системы. Автор обращает внимание на тот факт, что государство стремится инструктировать и руководить, а молодые ученые очень часто сопротивляются этим инструкциям.*

**Ключевые слова:** *система образования, свобода обучения, централизация, стандартизация.*

*The article deals with the issue of the freedom to teach as the vital element of education system. The author takes into consideration the fact that the state is aimed at instruction and command whereas young scholars have a tendency to resist these instructions.*

**Key words:** *education system, freedom to teach, centralization, standardization.*

**Introduction.** Telling other people what to do has always been one of the most popular, and yet most difficult, arts of man. People are more inclined to instruct and command others than to mind their own business; and their willingness to do what they in turn are told has rarely matched the eagerness of others to advise them. The educational system is the largest instrument in the modern state for telling people what to do. It enrolls five-year-olds and tries to direct their mental, and much of their physical, social, and moral development for twelve or more of the most formative years of their lives. The enormous importance of this system is obvious. What is not so obvious is the fact that the state, just like individuals, finds irresistible the natural tendency to instruct and command, while on their part, young scholars have an equally natural tendency to resist instruction. The meeting of these two tendencies is the cause of what is currently called the «crisis» in public education.

**Discussion point.** By the time the power in education is divided among numerous politicians, trustees, and officials, little is left for teachers. Public interest requires public responsibility and that teachers must therefore be responsible to the state. We might well ask, however, whether their responsibility which in theory seems obviously in the interest of all concerned with education, has not gone too far; and whether in practice it has not become a position of subservience, which may defeat the purposes of education by killing the teaching profession. The present place of teachers and teaching in the school system does indeed provide justification for concern. An excess of administration at the top means for the teachers the humble status of low-rank civil servants [4, p. 21]. Emphasis on official opinion and practice exposes teaching to the frustrations of bureaucratic routine. The teaching profession boasts more ex-members than any other occupation in modern society. There may here be a threat to the safety of the democratic state in whose interest the system was begun.

There is nothing wrong with the act of teaching itself. One of the most important, interesting and rewarding occupations, it can compare favorably with any other profession. When we ask the reason for the acute shortage and high turnover of teachers we must look, not at the work, but at the conditions of work. Over these conditions teachers themselves have little control; the employer, which is the state, has complete responsibility. It is appropriate, therefore, to examine the effect of the state's responsibility on teaching and on the teachers [5, p.11].

The state everywhere comes between teachers and pupils and makes communication between them indirect. Unlike doctors, lawyers, and clergymen – or indeed plumbers, carpenters, and electricians – the teacher is not directly employed by those wishing his services. The real relationship is not between him and his pupils, but between the state and the pupils. The service he performs for them is not something determined by him or his profession but follows a set of requirements laid down by the state.

This relationship is emphasized on the pupil's side by the compulsion of a state service. Unlike the clients, patients and customers in other occupations, children are a non-paying captive audience required by law to attend school. Neither they nor their parents are able in the state system to seek out the teachers' services; they are ordered to come and get from them certain services which they may or may not wish, and to take them in the form of a curriculum which the teachers who do the providing are nevertheless not able to prescribe. One of the weaknesses of compulsory state education in a democratic system is that the initiative appears to lie with the provider of the service; the teacher is then something of a local agent only and consequently, pupils and parents do not tend to consider him with sufficient seriousness [4, p.36].

It might be fruitful to examine further how the pursuit of knowledge has been affected by this attitude to knowledge as a commodity to be dispensed rather than something for which the pupils must work.

The quality of teachers must, of course, be improved greatly before the freedom to teach can be fully justified.

The barrier between schools and universities cannot be justified. It is harmful to both because schools do not have association with leaders in the various fields of knowledge, and the universities do not have sufficient opportunity to influence the preparation of their prospective students [5, p.78].

In the trust system, *a school's relations with other schools would be largely a matter of association between staff* in a professional relationship.

It must not be supposed that an adoption of this new system all will be professional sweetness and intellectual light. There will still be poor schools and weak teachers. However, there will be far fewer poor schools and weak teachers than there are now because it will be harder to tolerate them than it is now. Their leadership, non-existent today, would be a force similar to comparable leadership in business and professional life [4, p. 42].

The most serious criticism of this plan by politicians and educationists is that there are today too many schools and teachers who would not know what to do with freedom to teach if they had it. The truth of this observation is a sad commentary on the present system; it is certainly not a justification for continuing it. The trust principle cannot be applied to every school and teacher all at once, but at first only to the better schools (it is not hard to judge which they are) and to competent teachers.

The school could become a community institution rather than a public utility, and it, together with its staff and its services, would enjoy the increased respect of pupils and parents. Indeed, education itself would enter a new era of development simply because it would be freed from bondage [8, p. 17].

The program and the mechanics of operation would be based on the abilities of, and the relationships between, teachers and pupils, on the plain facts of employment, and on the demands of knowledge and training. Emphasis on mass-production, assembly line, and propaganda would be replaced by attention to human needs and professional skill. «Professional» would once again be associated with teaching and the worship of the official and the «expert» would decline [1].

Some of the elements of freedom would ultimately be extended to the pupils, although the school would, of course, exercise substantial control over them.

*The examination system* would need a drastic change if freedom of teaching is to be encouraged. Here again the state's influence must be removed. The mechanics involved would depend, of course, on the area concerned, but the control of examinations could be placed in the hand of the universities and the teaching profession. They know what pupils will be expected to do on leaving school, and they know what pupils have been doing in school.

The promise of freedom for profession and individual raises the question of the democratic control of education which has been considered vital.

In the second place we submit that *centralization and standardization* as they are now encouraged are dangerous in education because they are far from being as «democratic» as they appear. Governments cannot turn on and distribute a regulated supply of education like electric energy. But schools organized on the basis of public ownership and individual enterprise can truly provide a high standard of education for all if given, not orders, but responsibility.

In the co-ordination of the efforts of different schools and teachers, there would be the influence of the universities and the professional associations. In the service to pupils there would be the opportunity and power to treat them as individuals rather than as statistics.

*A more realistic relation between the curriculum and the quality of the teachers* would be another beneficial result. A school which offered courses and facilities would have a clear understanding of, and obvious responsibility for the direct responsibility.

The great advantage of this plan is the determination of the curriculum according to the demands of the subjects to be taught, the facilities of the school, the abilities of the pupils, and the standards of the profession. The school, like any other organization, would have to depend on its own qualities and reputation and there could be none of the covering-up of weaknesses or of strengths so general today. It would not take long for employers, universities, pupils, and parents to recognize the merits of different schools, because relative competence upon graduation, now completely disguised, would soon be traceable to particular schools and teachers. The schools badly need this kind of stimulus to good teaching, and it can only be secured by giving them direct responsibility [4, p. 46].

For the teachers, the control of the curriculum would thus provide a new and stimulating interest in their work. They would have a sense of personal responsibility which would not only improve their work but also make teaching an attractive occupation, not for clerks, but for those who respect both knowledge and young people. The «do what you're told» atmosphere would be replaced by a policy of allowing teachers to do what they think best in the light of professional standards – the only policy upon which good teaching can really be based [1; 2].

Inexperienced or incompetent teachers will not be able to rely on following official formulas; they will have to find out how to keep up with other teachers and meet professional standards. The emphasis on talent and achievement could be the biggest single factor in making teaching sufficiently attractive to hold those who are now leaving by the thousands and to encourage the many others who would like to teach but who go to other fields where talent is recognized and encouraged [1; 2].

*The improvement of conditions of work* by the freedom to teach would inevitably have to be accompanied by increased salaries. People respect and pay those who have some power or reveal some special talent in the dispensing of their services. Teachers as a class are neither respected nor paid satisfactorily because they have no power which will enable them to bring forward their profession, so that the many talented teachers are not sufficiently recognized and the too many uneducated and incompetent people in the profession hold back the others.

Competence and devotion to duty could be rewarded. The third factor would be the market for individual teachers [4, p.49].

Those who fear that schools will compete with one another for teachers should ask themselves «Why not?»

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In education the customer is never sure of what he wants or what he is going to get, although it is the customer who must exert the main effort. This situation makes education impossible to guarantee, difficult to predict, and hard to understand and appreciate.

It is this particular aspect of education which helps to make it so incompatible with direct governmental administration. When people look to government for action and benefits they tend to expect service that is immediate, tangible, and practical: they count on the government to do what is necessary and produce obvious results [5, p.43]. The people are apt to interpret education as a political service rather than as an essentially human process.

The social service outlook inevitably affects the teachers and their work by making it difficult for the public to appreciate the teaching profession and understand its problems. The state, the public, and the pupils are not encouraged to regard teachers as leaders and guides in their field directing and assisting pupils in their quest for knowledge. Indeed, it is hard for teachers to think of themselves in this role.

The state is too easily satisfied and little is done to improve the status of the profession. Under these circumstances the problems of salary, working conditions, training, and supply inevitably appear, and as inevitably remain.

The conditions under which teachers work are, however, a far more serious problem than salaries.

The classification system is one of the chief reasons why good teachers leave, why poor teachers remain, and why the profession is so powerless. «All for one and one for all» is an excellent tactic in its place.

There are more school teachers than doctors, lawyers, nurses, engineers and clergymen combined, and because the administration of their activities is so centralized, it is difficult, under political control, to accord them the privilege of professional recognition rather than just those of the holding of a job. It is also difficult to recognize ability [8, p. 24]. Because the minister of education and his departmental officials and the members and staffs of school boards have no real contact with a school, they have no sure way of making an official distinction between the teaching ability and professional reputation.

Of all the results of centralized state control for the practice of teaching, the most powerful, and at the same time, depressing, is the conformity it requires.

What happens when teachers are watched too closely, is that there can be no real academic freedom in that environment. There can be no exercise of the free intellect. Supineness and dogmatism take the place of enquiry. Instruction tends to become sterile; pursuit of knowledge is discouraged. A school system producing students trained as robots threatens to rob a generation of the versatility that had been perhaps our greatest distinction.

The prevailing attitude is one of the main reasons for the drop-outs from the teaching profession. The restrictive atmosphere in a host of trivial matters often turns competent and self-respecting individuals from the profession. The educator needs both security and freedom – security from the open and subtle pressures of the community and freedom to be an individual or even a «character.» [5, p. 28].

The consequence of state control of teachers and their training join to depress the profession itself. The lack of professional spirit among teachers and the acceptance of governmental rather than professional standards thus set up *a barrier against communication between the teachers and the public*. Important as teachers are to it, the community has not come to expect from them much leadership in their field of knowledge. In many places the teacher is looked upon as a naive amateur, rather than a competent authority, in what he teaches, and no amount of teaching ability can overcome this impression. As a result the community and the teachers lose the advantage which a combination of academic competence (where it exists) and practical application of knowledge could bring to both. Teachers cannot expect prestige unless they deserve it and the tragic fact is that few of them deserve it. They have given up their interest in learning to concentrate on performing their routine tasks [7, p. 61].

The public school trust is organized around *the principle of the freedom to teach*. This principle should be established in the conditions of work in schools and in the manner and matter of teaching itself. Freedom to teach is a necessary accompaniment for the ability to teach because it liberates judgment and initiative. Freedom is also essential to a professional respect: self-respect among teachers is required if their ambitions are to find satisfaction in teaching; the respect of the public is vital if teaching is to be recognized as a profession worthy of the support we say it deserves. Any doctor, lawyer, or newspaperman would say the same of his occupation. It is time that our society realizes that the training of the mind requires conditions of freedom at least as favorable as those applicable in the treatment of the body, the practice of law, and the reporting of daily news [4, p. 25].

The conditions of teaching in a school would thereupon be changed substantially. The board of trustees would recognize and accept the council's power and interest itself in academic matters only where the budget was affected or where serious difficulties arose which the council could not solve. Thus the program of a school would be decided, not in a remote government office, but in the board room of the school by the group of people who best know their subjects and pupils, who have the most realistic grasp of conditions, and who are in close touch with the standards that both universities and employers require [6, p. 15].

**Conclusions.** A democratic country and its people need intellectual leadership just as much a political, economic, and military leadership, and it must come largely from teachers in the colleges and schools. When this fact is realized and recognized by means of freedom to teach, existing teachers will rise to the occasion and others will seek to exercise their talents by joining the profession [5, p. 67].

Pupils are best developed under genuine leadership. Training rather than stuffing, leading instead of managing, requiring rather than coaxing, trusting in place of herding are the techniques which education deserves and which children will appreciate. Young people will have to carry democracy into the future; they can do so only if they grow up under its auspices, understand its responsibilities, and appreciate its benefits. The place for them to start is in the schools.

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