

# Fundamental Pedagogic Principles

*Below are listed some fundamental pedagogic principles. They are 35 years old, but are still valid and fresh today. They were developed in the beginning of the 1970's by the initiators of a school cooperative, which grew into more than 40 private schools in Denmark for children, youth and adults. The Travelling Folk High Schools, were part of this.*

The Pedagogic principles are still highly relevant today and have the potential to serve as an example for everything connected to school and training. The principles go further than most ordinary ways and concepts, both in their attitudes to human beings and to school, their view on schools, as well as in the strivings and their practical implementation.

The Pedagogic principles are included below:

## Here they are – first in a short form:

1. You have to go exploring in order to acquire new ideas. And explore further to form better ideas.
2. You have to get close to the things you want to learn about. The closer you get, the more you learn.
3. Together with your fellow students you must be the driving force in the work in order to learn much. Teacher's tricks won't do to put you on your toes. Life is too important for that.
4. You should be forewarned: once you get into your stride, you'll want to do more and more. The deeper you go into a question, the more you'll want to know. There is much work on this –but in return you'll avoid being superficial and half-awake.
5. There isn't time to learn everything at school. Like an iceberg perhaps only one tenth of what you'd like to be able to know. The rest comes later.
6. Only Adam, at first, was alone in the world. All the rest of us are here together.
7. The things you learn should be put to use. Now, if possible – so that others may learn from you. Possibly later, as the occasion arises. What you have learned twice as well by teaching it to others.
8. You have to be mobile, then you will encounter many things. Otherwise, things come to a stop – even though your eyes are staring out of your head. From just one place you can't see far.



# Fundamental Pedagogic Principles

**In addition there are slogans.**

They are used as all sorts of occasions and constitute in their simplicity sources for both seriousness and laughter. They are:

*“Out of the pipe”, meaning: “Don’t hang around in there, get out and get going!”.*

*“Once more”, meaning that you must do it again.*

*“Give it the whole arm”, meaning: “Don’t just use your little finger when trying, give it all that you have got”.*



**Future DIs on the road to explore new things**

**Here the nine pedagogic principles are repeated in a form, which is more spelled out:**

- 1. You have to go exploring to acquire new ideas. And to explore further to form better ideas.**

For altogether too many years, people wanting to learn more than they know already have been obliged to take a seat. In Denmark people start to learn anything at all by sitting down. And that is how they remain. Perfectly boring most of the time. And quite divorced from the experience of ordinary mortals who know that it is where things are happening in real life, that we are able to learn. At our schools we start in the world at large. And we use the school buildings as places in which to accumulate and exchange experiences, to read and argue, for what the teachers have to tell and the participants to report. Next we use the things we have learned on further explorations. Thus we apprehend that we must practice learning what we do not know. We go exploring to acquire new ideas – and we explore further to form better

## **2. You have to get close to the thing you want to learn about. The closer you get, the more you learn.**

Imagine yourself high up in an aircraft flying across Africa. 30.000 feet below are the countries, the people. You are sitting up there. Reading. About Africa, it's countries and its people. This is all wrong. Things aren't quite that bad in school. We believe, however, that teaching should take place outside the classrooms. Starting in the natural setting of the subject to be learned. Bringing in the people who are there. They know where the shoe pinches. The students must be there, too. Or they must have plenty of opportunities to put questions based on personal on-the-spot observations. Then the school buildings turn into an asset, as the place where the school - being a segment of society - connects students with society. In our teaching we must make sure that everyone gets as close as possible to the subject matter of our lessons. We have learned that the closer we get, the more we learn.

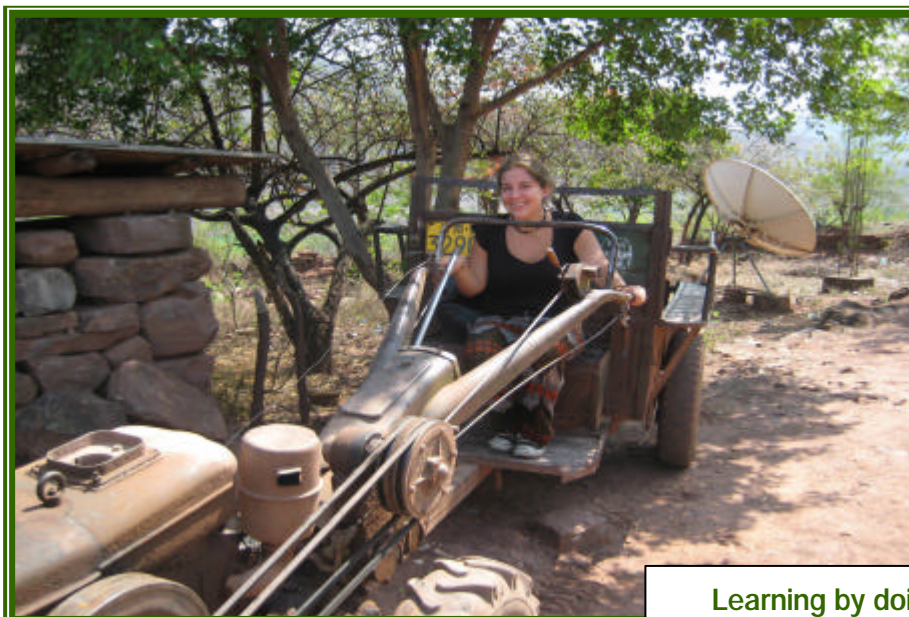
## **3. Together with your fellow students you must be the driving force in the work in order to learn much. Teachers' tricks won't do to put you on your toes. Life is too important for that.**

In the country there are, actually, courses on motivation for teachers. And for foremen and employers. For the purpose of teaching these people how to make other people do something these others don't quite like doing. The idea being that they should be motivated to perform against their own wishes.

Big and little tricks invented by sales psychologists. The issues taken up by a school have to be of vital concern to the participants. That is precisely what learning about world conditions and trying to understand the destiny of our globe is to people today. Because it is their destiny as well. Also, it is absolutely decisive that modern man should learn to stand shoulder to shoulder in communities committed to goals of manifest relevance to our common future.

What is vitally important is the solution of these problems. More and more people not least among the young are beginning to realise that this is so today.

That is why they look for education where they along with their fellow students can be the driving force in the effort to learn about these matters. They don't want to be put on their toes by little teachers' tricks - their lives are too important for that.



Learning by doing

**4. One should be forewarned: Once you get into your stride, you'll want to do more and more. The deeper you get into a question, the more you'll want to know. There is much work in this – but in return you'll avoid being superficial and half-awake.**



**You have a driving force!**

“Young people don’t want to work. Hands stuck in pockets, ears jammed with stereo-music and all impudent lip when addressed.”

How many times we have heard comments like this?

But when the strength and the capacities of a generation are plainly needed, hands emerge from pockets ready to go to work. And then one thing leads to another. Just can’t help doing so. And from learning to doing there isn’t far to go – mastering a trade and participating it in a productive context, travelling with others and writing and talking about experiences and thoughts. Exploring one’s own society and taking a stand. Participating in the discussions of decision-making and assemblies on vital questions. Being able to make music and sing and dance and do sketches and to paint. There is no end to these delights. But you’ll have to make the effort. Given proper structures and decent conditions this generation is more than ready to do so: It is ready to follow through.

**5. There isn’t time to learn everything at school. Like an iceberg perhaps only one tenth of what you’d like to be able to do and know. The rest comes later.**

A school and its world is sometimes called a ghetto, a world out of touch with its surroundings. Not just because teachers and students go there in the morning, staying inside until they disperse in all directions in the afternoon. But also because teachers and students go there in the morning, staying inside until they disperse in all directions in the afternoon. But also because what you are made to learn has no relevance for many students. Nor, most likely, for some teachers. In a situation like that you forget almost entirely what it is like to learn something of value. The stagnant state is the state of things you get used to. And in this situation your expectations mushroom. Probably more than warranted.

**6. Only Adam, at first, was alone in the world. All the rest of us are here together.**

Fellowship or collectivism if you wish isn’t a modern, smart way of life or a status promoting gimmick in the wake of the student movement. Nor is it bound up closely with trendiness, hippie culture or any other phenomenon possessing a common characteristic in that

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At our schools we do not make fellowship the pivot of teaching and living because “we might as well”. We make it so because we cannot have a school without it. Profound knowledge of fellowship can be learned only in fellowship, solidarity only by standing shoulder to shoulder. Only many together can solve problems that can be solved only by joint efforts of many together. Development is brought about only through the influence of great numbers of people. Generations have learned that the world changes only when many people *take a hand* in changing it.

This is a pedagogic prerequisite that doesn't exclude the individual. On the contrary it makes up the decisive link in the chain connecting the present with the past and the future.

**7. The things you learn should be put to use. Now, if possible – so that others may learn from you. Possibly later, as the occasion arises. What you have learned you learn twice as well by teaching it to others.**

The entire question is a sensitive one. Replies such as, “you are going to need it when you grow up”, “just you wait and see, you may need it some day, I am sure”, and “you'll need it for your exams” are quite common.

Other replies may be closer to the truth. Such as “The things you learn are to make you suited to go to work in some place and do as you are told. Make you deserve your pay”. Or “What you learn is meant to enable you to participate in the parliamentary democracy”. Another reply is given infrequently: “The things you learn you must use to advance reasonable demands for a change in the world, to make it more like what you think it should be”. In our schools the answer is this: “You must teach others. The things you have learned should benefit others as well. You must learn in order to be able to take a stand and to make things happen. And you and the others jointly must decide what would be useful to learn and how to go about it.”



**8. You have to be mobile, then you will encounter many things, otherwise, things can come to a stop – even though your eyes are staring out of your head. From just one place you can't see far.**

If you stay inside the school at all times you don't see far. A school needs vehicles, students must be able to move around in the city, the country and the world.

At our schools we have busses for classrooms – and ships. Stables and workshops for common rooms. And the world is where we serve our apprenticeship. This takes money – and in our budgets we have allocations for these things. In the budget of a school you can read about the activities preferred by the teachers. You can discern their pedagogy.

And if you can see that the amounts set aside for transport are but small – then you may be quite sure this hasn't been a matter of much interest to the people drawing up the budget. To us it is important. We want to be mobile – encounter many things. Otherwise everything comes to a stop.

**9. All this applies to teachers, too.**

“Dear teacher, dear colleague, dear parents.

You must go exploring to be able to acquire new ideas. You have much to learn still. That is why you must try to get close to the things you want to learn about. The closer you get, the more you get out of it.

Your ingrown habits won't put you on the track of the new things you must learn. You – in the company of your associates and your children must be the driving force in the work to learn much. It isn't the old tricks that should put you on your toes. Life is too important for that.

Once you get into your stride one thing leads to another. There is no way of stopping. Your experiences are wonderful basic qualifications. You work in jobs all over the country. You know the roots of the children.

You, more than anyone else, are familiar with the fact that Man is not alone in the world.

You have seen loneliness. And perhaps you know fellow human beings in distress. Support your children in their work to build fellowships and to stand shoulder to shoulder.

Learn from your children – that's going to make them receptive to learning from you.”



Get friends with children