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I make no apology in stating that my perception of education as outlined here represents an ideal model. Such a model is of course susceptible to human failing, whether caused by personality factors or inconsistencies in human behaviour. Nevertheless one has to operate from a theoretical and philosophical base whilst accepting that in reality the execution will inevitably contain certain imperfections.

My primary tenet is that education is one of the dimensions of human existence. It is a growth process as innate as the suckling response in a human infant. In this respect it is self driven and the educator's function is to sponsor and nourish it. It is also an ongoing process commencing at birth, if not before, and terminating at death. Consequently it is misguided to believe or to work from a belief that education is what occurs in school and in subsequent forms of formal education. This is however a view that persists; mention 'education' and the immediate illicited association is 'school'. So to educate is not the preserve of the teacher, it is the function of all life's experiences. What school does provide is the environment in which the process of education can be focused and formalised at a time in human development where the individual is receptive at a high level. It should be so structured as to draw upon the past, present and future experiences of those it seeks to serve.

It follows from this that the teacher should be both the enabler and the partner in the educative process and the process is one of drawing out. The teacher should be drawing upon and promoting the self motivation of the young person. He should be encouraging natural curiosity and enquiry, and responding to it.

Natural curiosity will motivate the child to endeavour to acquire an understanding of the multifarious aspects about himself and the society within which he is developing. A hitherto neglected area in this respect is broadly covered by the term 'personal and social education'. Covering a wide spectrum including health, careers and political education, personal development, personal relationships and social and life skills education much of the education in this field was contained within the so-called 'hidden curriculum'. This relates to the general ambience and ethos of the school as exemplified by the behaviour patterns and nature of interpersonal relationships existing, accepted or sponsored by the organisation. Relatively recently the hidden curriculum has been examined and explored as an open and declared part of the school's curriculum function for all children.

As a partner in this personal and social development the teacher's function is to enable the child to explore his world and his ways of operating within it. In performing this function the teacher should not take on the role of social engineer dedicated to the task of moulding young minds according to what he (the teacher) considers to be the correct model. Young people demand a clear framework to operate within and we as teachers owe it to them to provide such a framework of behavioural expectations according to societal norms. A delicate balance needs to be maintained between reflecting societal trends and leading new developments; schools must be neither behind in reflecting societal changes nor too far in advance of them. It is vital that within the framework we offer the young people should have presented to them alternative ways of being in respect of life styles, interpersonal behaviour and ways of viewing the society in which we live. In addition we should encourage them to develop their own personal resourcefulness for making choices and decisions to enable young people to leave their period of formal education as autonomous and confident individuals, able to enter into society and to contribute to it. Schools should aim to turn out young adults rather than old children.