

JUNGLE SCHOOL (A fable) *From the book of P. Ribes, s.j. "Foundry Workers or Gardeners" published by the Gujarat Sahitya Prakash.*

Main Themes:

*What is the main objective of education? **Formation or Information?***

Are our School syllabuses sensible and adapted to the needs of our students?

Why there are so many failures in our system of education

Target Audiece:

Parents and Teachers.

The Fable

Once upon a time, the animals in the jungle decided to open a school for their children. They called a general body meeting of all the inhabitants of the forest. Unanimously they agreed that in keeping with modern trends in education, it was imperative that all the citizens of the forest should learn all arts and sciences. Their slogan was: '**Integral education is a must**'.

A 'unique' plan of education was drawn up for all the animals to follow. Every creature, big or small, should learn all the animal trades. The youngsters – without distinction – would be taught flying, running, swimming, climbing trees, jumping, making nests, boring holes, singing, chirping and the rest. That would be a compulsory, all round, integral syllabus of education.

On the opening day of the school, one could hear the teachers telling the pupils: 'In our school, my dear children, you will learn all the things all the citizens of the jungle do. Anyone of you will be able to fly like an eagle, run like a deer, sing like a nightingale and climb trees like a monkey. It will be fun!'

A few days later, you could hear the following exchanges between a teacher and a tortoise: 'Come on! Run! Faster! Faster! Can't you catch up with the hare?' 'Teacher, I can't! I can't!' Of course, you can! Come on! Try, try again! I can't teacher. I tried my best! You, lazy boy, can't you run for nuts? I see that you are disobedient and uncooperative. If you do not try again, I'll fail you.' Finally, the tortoise failed in the race. He could not make the grade. He became a failure, and so he dropped out of school.

Next day, you could hear another teacher yelling at a baby elephant: 'Come here! Show me how much you learned already to climb a tree! Quick, come on, fast climb! Why are you not moving? You lazy bones! You are useless. You will never learn a thing.' Needless to say, the elephant also failed his class and dropped out from school.

And so the eagle was also a failure for not learning to swim, and the monkey for not flying, and the horse for not chirping. Before the end of the year, all the animals had dropped out of school. **All had become failures!**

And the school closed down. From then on, life in the forest went on as before. Each animal went practicing and perfecting his skill; yet, things were not quite the same, because, the school had taught one and all the same lesson; **that all were failures and drop-outs; that none of them had made the grade!**

(An adaptation of a script of a Spanish Audiovisual)

POINTS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION:

1. What are the lessons teachers and educators can draw from the story of the ‘Animal School’?
2. Is the ideology of ‘integral education for all’ possible? Why?
3. Is it fair to our pupils? Why?
4. Why are there so many failures in our school system?
5. How is it that a large number of students, even clever and successful ones, after finishing their schooling, see themselves as failures and feel bad about themselves?
6. Should education be ‘subject-centered’ or ‘pupil centered’? Why? Give ‘pros and cons’.
7. Mention some of the wrong assumptions inherent in our philosophy and present system of education?
8. What should be the goal and objectives of education?
9. Can you point out the differences between ‘formation’ and ‘information’, ‘schooling and education’? Which of them are given priority in our educational institutions? What are the consequences? How to counteract that wrong emphasis?
10. Should ‘competitiveness’ be the most important tool to motivate our students? Does this stress on competition help or hinder true education?
11. Is education, as obtains today, meant to succeed in competitive exams, to secure high marks or to impart knowledge, and prepare students for life? What are results of it?
12. Do our students, as a whole, study to ‘earn a living’ or to ‘learn for life’? What are the consequences for their life?
13. Can you give some suggestions on how to improve the quality of our children’s education within the system we are caught up?
14. Would the ‘de-linking’ of degrees from job opportunities help to improve our standards of education?
15. What is more important, to perform a task, to secure a degree or acquire the proper knowledge to lead a fruitful and meaningful human life? Why?

INPUT: Discuss the Following Statements.

- ✓ Do not let your schooling interfere with your education
- ✓ Schooling and degrees are just means, education is the goal.
- ✓ Our educational system trains for a living not for life. .
- ✓ Our educational system makes computers and robots out of our students,

- ✓ Our world ranks high in intellectual pursuits, but fails in social concern and humanness. .
- ✓ The goals and objectives of our educational system are centripetal; not centrifugal.
- ✓ Our educational system is in need of a Copernican revolution
- ✓ There were no failures in the world until schooling was invented
- ✓ Our school system is like a defective Xerox machine turning out spoiled copies of a perfect originals..
- ✓ God made our children, our schooling unmakes them.
- ✓ Wisdom is better than knowledge.
- ✓ Are our children after graduation any wiser?
- ✓ \Knowledge without wisdom is a dangerous thing.

