

THE SHARKS AND THE SMALL FISH

From the book of P. Ribes, s.j. "Foundry Workers or Gardeners" published by the Gujarat Sahitya Prakash.

Theme:

- ✓ *Governmental educational policies and methods are politically engineered by 'the powers that are' to control the members of society, maintain the 'status quo' and defend their interests,*
- ✓ *Most of them are sheer Indoctrination, Brainwashing and Biased Socialization.*
- ✓ **Target Audience:**
- ✓ *Parents, teachers and educators.*
- ✓ *General public. Social activists*

THE FABLE

Once upon a time at the bottom of the sea, the sharks built huge boxes for the small fish to live in. In them they kept all sorts of dainty food – vegetarian and non-vegetarian. They made sure that these boxes contained plenty of clean and fresh water to drink. They, also, provided the smaller fish, with all health arrangements.

For instance, if a fish got badly injured, the sharks would immediately administer the proper medicine to save him from untimely death.

Lest the small fish would feel bored and in the dumps the sharks organized some parties and entertainments to keep them cheerful in the company of other happy fish. Happy fish, after all, taste better!

Needless to say, in those boxes at the bottom of the sea, the sharks built beautiful "schools" for the small fish. In those "schools" the small fish would be taught how to swim fearlessly to the jaws of the sharks. The small fish were taught Geography, so that they could for instance find the exact places where the sharks dwell enjoy and multiply.

Of course, the most important subject in the school curriculum was "moral instruction". The small fish were taught that the greatest ideal of a fish is to surrender itself to the sharks in a spirit of joyful generosity.

It was brought home to the little fish that they should believe the sharks, when told of the "golden" future they – the sharks – were preparing for them. The small fish were taught to keep severely away from any kind of critical thinking, questioning and of the dangers of freedom. They were told to report to the sharks any infringement by any other fish of the 'lofty and unselfish' teachings of their masters.

They were taught art. Art, of course, was something integral to 'fishy culture'. One could see in their classrooms full size and multiple colored drawings of all sorts of sharks and

of their jaws. The shark mouth was depicted as a playground where the small fish could enjoy themselves in merriment.

In their theatres, down in the sea bottom, all sorts of plays were shown in which, the small fish were portrayed as swimming enthusiastically into the jaws of the sharks. Even the 'religion' the small fish were taught exalted and sanctified the generosity of dying in the gullets of the sharks.

The sharks saw to it that the small fish would cease to be equal among them. Some would be given jobs and assignments of certain power and authority, thus putting them in charge of others. In this manner, the sharks got teachers, engineers, box-makers, nurses, tailors and even priests, to help them in the training and education of future generations of small fish!

The bigger fish were, occasionally, allowed to eat up the smaller ones. This would please the sharks very much because in the not too distant future, they would be able to gobble up bigger and tastier fish!

I am sure that with a bit of research, we, humans could to learn at the bottom of the sea, a wonderful plan to train, form and educate our young ones.

(Free translation and adaptation of a Spanish audiovisual "A critique of 'Schooling' as 'Socialization and Brain-Washing'" by: Bertold Brecht.)

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION AND SHARING:

Note for the Modertor:

Below you will find acme questions for discussion and sharing. You may frame new questions of your making.

1. What part of the story has impressed you most and why?
2. What message has this story for us?
3. What was the goal the Sharks had in mind in their educational policy?
4. What were the methods the sharks employed to indoctrinate 'socialize' and 'brainwash' the small fish?
5. Can you find some similarities between the type of education the sharks imparted to the small fish at the bottom of the sea and the one we are impart in our classrooms?
6. In real life who are the sharks of the story? Who are the little fish?
7. In the process of education for what purpose are we using - or rather misusing - art, music, poetry, literature and other cultural values? How?
8. What about our religious and moral values in education? Are we using them to promote personal freedom and responsibility, concern for others, justice and love for the neighbors or may be, for other purposes? What those other purposes could be?
9. As believers, why, what for and how should we teach religion and moral values to our young?
10. Are we clean from indoctrination, brainwashing and misguided socialization **both in the content of our teachings and – even more – in the methods we follow?** How much we fault in them? Express your views

11. Do we give to religious and moral formation in our educational work the priority they deserve? Why? If not, what should we do? Give suggestions.
12. Do we aim in our teaching ministry, at **forming** the persons of our charges rather than at imparting **information**? Express your views.
13. What's more important: formation or information.?
14. Can we build our pupils 'characters even while teaching secular subjects? How
15. By force of circumstances we have become the stooges of the Government and of the higher-ups in implementing their wrong educational policies. Should we surrender to them? What can we do?
16. Mention the goals that should motivate any healthy and human educational programs.
17. Explain the flowing sentence: "Education has a "social function" What do we mean by that?
18. In education **whose interests should we primarily promote**? :
 - Those of the individual persons or those of the government'? Why?
 - Those of the individual persons of those of the market? Why?
 - Those of the individuals of those of the Institutions we work for? Why?
19. Should education 'socialize' the students? Why? How much? How?
20. What are your views on 'culture' and 'education'? What are their mutual relationships?
21. Do you find any 'cultural' values missing in our system of education? Which? How could we incorporate them in our teaching?
22. Comment on the meaning of some of the topics hinted at in the story of the Sharks; Among them you may find the following:
 - Huge boxes - overcrowded cities
 - Medicine and health services in industrialized societies
 - Games and leisure as mass anesthesia
 - Schooling as an agent of alienation.
 - Moral education as a cultural opiate
 - The future is bright for the "conformists" and the "brainwashed"
 - The power of Ideologies
 - Artistic expressions as means of cultural brainwashing. Music - Paintings - T. V - Novels - Theatre -
 - The loafs of office as an incentive to social exploitation and domination.

**SUGGESTED THOUGHTS AND REFLECTIONS TO LEAD
DISCUSSIONS OR GIVE INPUTS**

Legitimacy of The Government's Educational Policies

A Mooted Question:

- ✓ It is praiseworthy and legitimate for Government and other Authorities to lay down educational policies and methods to educate the young and prepare them to fit into the social context where they are born and where they will live.

- ✓ It is laudable to improve, through education, the standards of living of our fellow citizens, to ameliorate their social condition, to grow more food, to promote health care, build more houses and raise the intellectual level of the young generations.
- ✓ **However, the all important thing is to know what the goals our education policy makers have in mind.**

What Education is Meant for.

- ✓ **Education is an effort and a process to help the young to bring out what's best in them, grow, and make them capable of being free thinking and responsible persons in society.**
- ✓ **Education should aim both at the welfare of the individual persons we educate and equally and at the welfare of the society at large. Education, directly and indirectly, aims at the welfare and improvement of the entire social body. Education has a social function.**

What Education is not Meant for.

- ✓ Education is not meant for turning our young ones into cogs of a social machine engineered by the government, and the powers that are for some ulterior motives of their own, like to perpetuate the “status quo” which primarily, benefits the upper crust and the dominant classes of society.

Points for Critical Reflection:

- ✓ The educational policies and methods advocated by the higher ups, often enough, are nothing more than mechanical robot like devices, **depersonalizing techniques, and indoctrination and brainwashing methods.**
- ✓ The type of education, imposed on us by the “experts”, most of the times, stunts the personal growth of our young preventing them from becoming **free, thinking and responsible persons.**

The Reality of Education Today and its Challenges.

- ✓ All governments of any ideological hue, and the “powers- that- are”, are greatly interested in the goals and in the methods used to “educate” their young citizens.
- ✓ The goals and methods of education, imposed by the political high-ups, are not conducive to true education. They are simply **“domesticating”, “training” and “molding gimmicks” to make the young fit into the type of “society” our rulers and influential people need in order to safeguard their political and economical interests.**
- ✓ **For policy makers and those manipulating the “power–apparatus”, education has never been and it will never be a “neutral”, much less an “altruistic issue”.**
- ✓ **Their goal is not education for education’s sake, but rather as a powerful tool in their hands to promote their ideologies and sustain the political and economical “status quo”**

- ✓ **The aim of the world’s governments in their educational” policies has always been “Socialization”, “Indoctrination”, “Brainwashing”,and now-a-days “Globalization” to maintain and strengthen a world order based on a materialist philosophy and a consumerist society.! In practice, a world without God!**

FIVE QUESTIONS WE EDUCATORS, SHOULD SERIOUSLY ASK .

1. Have we ever seriously reflected on the consequences for tomorrow’ generations of and the ‘type of education’ and ‘culture’ promoted in our world today, even in our Christian Institutions?
2. Do we, in our educational institutions, offer equal educational facilities to all members of society, irrespectively to their social, class, caste, creed or color?
3. Do we help our young citizens to grow as persons, to become free and responsible citizens, and to think for themselves?
4. What is our main concern in education, to form or to inform our charges? **Formation or information?**
5. Do we train our “educandi” to respect and show concern for their fellowmen citizens and sacrifice themselves for them.
6. We talk of ‘equality’ of opportunities before the law. Are we not, all the while, creating and fostering economical, social and cultural disparities by the discriminatory educational practices we enforce?

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES:

Note for the Moderaor:

- *You may encourage the participants to engage in some activities to further assimilate the insights of the day. We suggest some simple ones to be prepared in smaller groups and presented later on to the house on the topics mentioned above.*

Activities:

Murals	Comic strips	Puppet shows
Posters	Radio plays	Shadow plays
Collages	Tableaux	Role plays
Scripts	Parables	Dance drams
Debates.	Round-table conferences	Discussions.

On the meaning and purpose of the items below in the educational field.

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| ▪ Education | • Social classes | • Painting |
| ▪ Schooling | • Social promotion | • Dancing |
| ▪ Degrees | • Music | • Religion |
| ▪ Family | • Government | • Religion only |
| ▪ Ideologies | • Totalitarianism | • Moral instruction |
| • Cities | • Games and sports | • Indoctrination |
| ▪ Standard of life | • T.V. | • Advertising |
| ▪ Movies | • Civilization | • Progress |
| • Law | • Authority & power | • Liberty |

FOUR PERSONAL REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS FOR THOSE WE EDUCATE.

1. Ask the participants to prepare a list of the occupations, studies, games, pastimes, religious practices, social events and other activities they involve themselves in.
2. Next, request them to find out the ‘whys’ of them. What is the real purpose, if any, in their getting involved in them?
3. What are, or what could be their conscious or unconscious motives...
4. What is their real purpose?
 - **Have they chosen them freely on their own?**
 - **Have they been bluffed into them by advertising?**
 - **Have they, somewhat, been imposed on them by social and external pressures?,**

