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In this day and age there are, as I see it, two groups into which pupils fit; those who fail to understand why they are really at school, and those who succeed. To start with I shall deal with the former.

- Why do I really go to school? is a question which for so long has been met with the rather uninspiring reply: - You need qualifications for a job! This is so vague and indefinite that it inevitably leads to the attitude: - I'll worry about a job when I come to need one.

This basic failure to realise the necessity of education is in itself typical of the hoi polloi today. Many people in this category flit through the education system emerging without a single qualification to their name. And whose fault is it? Students tend to blame their teachers, who turn on the parents, who blame both. If only they worked together in a parent-student-teacher association the problem would surely be solved in many cases. But as it is, vast numbers of uneducated, and in some cases now ineducable, teenagers pour out of the schools.

Many are clueless as to what vocation they should pursue, and even more fail to realize that throughout the rest of their working lives they are repaying society for an education they never really received.*

So the problem boils down to - what should be taught in the schools and on what subjects, and to what extent should they learn at home?***

So then to the second group of pupils who are less typical of this age in their erudition. How do they 'gain the upper hand' in this system, which is likely to lead to a better standard of living? This advantage must surely begin at home in the very first years of life. But it can easily be wrecked at various points along the route to success by abject teachers, just as those from the former group can be uplifted sufficiently to 'see the light', as it were, and get something worthwhile out of education by the most motivated of teachers.

Therefore those who have the ability to use education to their own advantage understand that, when they work in the future, they pay back society for something they really did receive, and so derived that invaluable insight into life which the former group were deprived of. From this it would seem that there is balance between the parent and teacher inputs towards the output of an 'educated child'.

Of course by no means all teachers are able to act their part in this 'production' of an educated pupil. There are a host of distractions to prevent even the keenest teacher. As class numbers have swollen drastically in the past ten years, so the familiarity of the teacher with the students fades. Therefore a larger proportion of the first group work to a considerably lesser extent than they would have done in a smaller class especially geared to their needs, and similarly for those with flair for any particular subject at the other end of the scale.

Some say that such an isolation of the weak from the strong in mind is unfair to the former; to my mind it is unfair to both parties. So what is this seemingly unfair part in the advancement of the second pupil group that we may see at an early age how and why they could and should use the education system to better prepare themselves for life? Assuming that it can only be called unfair if the advantage is gained from a source open to everyone, at someone else's expense, if the advantage is gained from parents at home in the form of money or extra education or greater stimulation towards learning (as I think it is), then it cannot be classed as unfair.

* The fact that they did not want it cannot be blamed on the students, or after all what does a typical student want to learn?

** Many parents obviously believe that some all-encompassing course exists entitled "How to cope with everything you will ever meet in life", which can be taught at the drop of a hat. On the other hand the teachers tend to assume parents have made their children 100% conversant with life, its morals and virtues, etc. and their own job should exclusively be restricted to the instruction of a child in academic work. If Socrates were alive today no doubt he could have helped us to sort out this pressing problem, but he is not, and indeed it seems we shall not.