

OTHER CONTRIBUTIONS

School Days

Elisa Massaiu

Independent Thinker of Education, Italy

When I was a student I didn't like school very much. The classroom was old, the walls were an awful greenish colour, there was no heating, the desks were chipped and too high. I guess some teachers would try to make the lesson a bit more interesting, but without much success. I don't remember these people at all. Yet there were two or three teachers who loved their job, they liked being with us, and the hardship of their life didn't get in the way when they entered the school door.

Those teachers were the best. They knew us. And they enjoyed talking to us, listening to our ideas, they wanted to know who we were outside those walls. Granted when it was time to grade our papers they wouldn't do anyone any favours. They were strict when they needed to be. But somehow they had the key to make the class work. For some reason their lessons were interesting and the lesson content somewhat easy to learn.

Today I am a mum of two. I see that nothing much has changed since my days as a school-aged child. The schools are still run down. Once, while I was in line to talk to my son's teacher I heard another parent saying that she recognised the desk where she used to sit when she was eleven. Sadly

the teachers haven't changed much either. After three years the Math teacher of my eldest keeps reading to me the grades of another thirteen years old from another class. Why? I don't know. The German teacher just complains about this so-called "terrible class," and she has no clue who my son is... I wonder how my sons feel when they are sitting in that class. Are they counting the minutes until class is finished? I know I did. And yet outside school I was an avid reader. I read everything that had words on it. It didn't matter if it was about history or art or geography. I couldn't stop myself. I wanted to know everything there was to know. I see my sons doing the same. So how is it possible for the teacher not to work well with a student eager to learn?

I think teaching must be a difficult job, but for sure something ought to change. The school system in Italy is obsolete, it hasn't changed much for a century now but we can't say the same about kids. They are smarter, quicker and constantly stimulated by the world around them. So teachers have to work twice as hard to keep students interested. But where should they start? Well how about the layout of the classroom? Every month or so my kids tell me they have moved to another

school desk, yes apparently they still sit one desk behind another facing the teacher, which means that the kids sitting in the last row are more likely to get distracted, whilst the teacher attends to the kids in the front row. The center of the lesson is the teacher. But the focus should be the students; they should be able to see each other, maybe sitting in a circle, engaged in the discussion about the French revolution, actively, not as passive listeners.

Because that is precisely what school should prepare children for: to think.

Back in my days we had a black chalkboard; today every classroom has chipped benches and an LIM (Interactive

Multimedia Board). To be fair some teachers know how to use it better than others - it's an improvement. Yet my sons are still going to school carrying a backpack as heavy as me. Isn't a tablet enough? I can guarantee they'd be more than happy to use it!

I could go on and on but I don't want to bore the unlucky reader. All I do in my spare time is spend time with my kids who are 13 and 11 years old. I listen to what they say, how they see the world and what they want to do and I think I am raising the citizens of tomorrow. It's a great responsibility and I take it seriously. As a mum I think I am doing my bit. Is the school system doing the same?

Author Details

Elisa Massaiu works in a bank. She lives in the province of Florence, Italy. Contact address: emassaiu@yahoo.com



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