

Music Power

What is good for the Child is good for the World

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How has it come about that our perspective on our unequal work nowadays is so artificial; that those who deal with dead things, such as data, money and similar matters, often earn considerably more than those who work with living human beings; that the salary of programmers and stockbrokers mostly exceed that of the nursery teacher, the school teacher and the nurse. This demonstrates a point of view and attitude which is on a collisions course with the healthy development of society.

Should the teacher concentrate on education or behaviour?

Within the education sector cutbacks have hit schools hard with the result that teaching takes place in classes which are far too big, and similarly the number of supply teachers has reduced the resources for learning. Social workers and school psychologists are given ever growing numbers of cases to deal with within a smaller time frame.

An increasing number of teachers experience their role getting ever more distant from their original ideas of teaching. Instead they find themselves much more concerned with attempts to convey to a growing number of students how to behave responsibly and work with other people. In other words they have to step in and belatedly give the poor students such understanding which they should have been given long ago, and which should have formed the basis for further learning – a difficult and often thankless task. During the 1990s political key figures stood up and said that 'we are going to have the best schools in all of Europe' or 'soon Sweden will have the best school system in the world'. Since then Sweden has declined by comparison with the results obtained by schools in other countries. Looking at people from a historical point of view a culture's decline and fall is often preceded by poor treatment of children and old people.

A flimsy argument?

Shinichi Suzuki founded his Talent Education Institute in 1945. More than sixty years ago, he was already convinced on the two points which were to be his main theses: 1) that a child's ability is not inborn but can be developed given good conditions and 2) this assumption can be the basis for building a better world.

Is this a flimsy, weak argument? Is it mistaken, unworldly idealism to believe this. Whoever says that it is should provide an alternative, something else which can be proved to work as well as Suzuki's ideas which use music as the means and human development as the goal. In 1969 Suzuki wrote the book *Ability Development from Age Zero*. In it he writes as follows:

The fate of a Child is In the Hands of His Parents

"When is a good time to start the violin?"

"My child is three years old. Is that too early to start the piano?"

I am frequently asked such inappropriate questions. It has often been said that it is best to start lessons from such-and-such an age, or starting too early is damaging. These opinions are erroneous. They are only theories. Can you conceive of thinking, "It is best to teach my child how to speak when he is five years old. Therefore he should not hear anyone speak until then." Nonsense! If a person actually did that to a child, it would be far too late for learning the language.

I do not think that anyone will ever find any bad effects from teaching a child his language at such an early age that he speaks fluently by the time he is five. The problem arises when the child is ignored during these important years.

From the day of birth, the body gradually grows, and the child adapts to his environment. When cultivating plants it is obvious that a seedling will wither if it is assumed that no water, sunshine, or fertilizer should be given to the plant until a specific time, and then it is flooded with all three. Humans also exist within the realm of nature, In principle we are no different than plants.

Einstein: "A new way of thinking!"

As parents and teachers we have in the Suzuki pedagogy a framework within which we can develop our good intentions for our children's growth and development. The sooner we realise that our children are the root of the tree which is our future community, the better. And the more care we put into the root, the better the tree. To save on our care for the root is about as clever as saving on the construction of the bottom of a boat or the wings of an aeroplane. What does anyone think can be gained from cutting back on our carefully built up municipal music schools - or from making nursery and school classes so large as to be unmanageable - or from a situation where nothing can be done about students with special problems - or by cutting back on teaching materials or maintenance? Whatever do we think we gain by not taking care of the new generation in the best possible way? By not caring for the root of the tree? Rather than saving, we risk the whole tree. Experience shows that in the long term we gain most by putting the greatest effort into giving human beings the best start in life. And at this point I would like to reveal a great secret: *These little children will one day be adults* - people with or without self-awareness, with or without the ability for empathy or logical thought, with or without the imagination or vision needed to solve the new problems waiting just around the corner, with or without the ability to lead humanity on its thorny path. Suzuki's friend and benefactor, Albert Einstein once said, "It requires a new of thinking to solve the problems which the old ways of thinking have created". That is why we need to see the important connections in life. And if we think that our gardeners are not competent at looking after our trees, then we have to change them. Olaf Palme once expressed the view that "Politics is will" and that is probably right, but just to will something is not enough. Decisions must also be taken which lead to positive consequences. To put less wood on the fire, while talking about having 'Europe's best bonfire' is the sort of thing which has contributed to people no longer taking politicians seriously.

A society where resources are invested in children is a society with belief in its future. Active participation in studying and performing music is such a resource.

That which is good for the child is good for the world

Our tree must bear fruit - Music power!