

Pedagogical principles

1. You have to go exploring to acquire new ideas – AND to explore further to form better ideas.

For many years, people wanting to learn more than they knew already have been obliged to take a seat. In Europe, people started to learn anything at all by sitting down.

And that is very nearly how they remain. Perfectly boring most of the time. And quite divorced from the experience of ordinary mortals, who know that it is where things are happening in real life that we are able to learn.

At CICD the main topic is the world and how to work together to improve it. And we use the school buildings as places in which to dive into a world of knowledge – theoretical and practical –and put it into practice to do good together with the Poor in Africa or India. We go exploring to acquire new ideas – and we explore further to form better ideas.

2. You have to get close to the thing you want to learn about. The closer you get, the more you learn.

Imagine yourself high up in an aircraft flying across Africa. 30,000 feet below there are the countries, the people.

You are sitting up there, reading. About Africa, its countries, its people. This is all wrong. Things aren't quite that bad in school. We believe, however, that teaching should go on outside classrooms, starting in the natural setting of the subject to be learned. Bringing in the people who are there. They know where the shoe pinches. The students must be there, too. Or, they must have plenty of opportunities to put questions based on personal on-the-spot observations. Then the school buildings turn into an asset, as the place where school, being a segment of society, connects students with society. In our teaching we must make sure that everyone gets as close as possible to the subject matter of our lessons. We have learned that the closer we get, the more we learn.

3. Together with your fellow students you are the driving force in the work in order to learn much more. Teachers' tricks won't do to put you on your toes. Life is too important for that.

In this World there are, actually, courses for teachers in motivation, and for foremen and employers. For the purpose of teaching these people how to make other people do something they don't quite feel like doing. The idea being that they should be motivated to perform against their own wishes.

But the issues taken up by a school have to be of vital concern to the participants. That is precisely what learning about world conditions and trying to understand the destiny of our globe is to people today. Because it is their destiny as well.

Also, it is absolutely decisive that modern man should learn to stand shoulder to shoulder and work together for our common future and to fight poverty and climate change. The solution to these problems are vitally important – also for our school.

4. You should be forewarned: Once you get into your stride, you'll want to do more and more. The deeper you go into a question, the more you'll want to know. There is much work in this – but in return you'll avoid being superficial and half-awake.

“Young people don't want to work. Hands stuck in pockets, ears jammed with stereo music, and all impudent lip when addressed.”

How many times have we heard comments like this? But when the strength and the capacities of a generation are plainly needed, hands emerge from pockets ready to go to work.

And then one thing leads to another. Just can't help doing so. And from learning to doing there isn't far to go – mastering a trade and practising it in a productive context, travelling with others and writing and talking about experiences and thoughts.

Being able to make music and sing and dance and sketch and paint. There is no end to these delights. But you will have to make the effort. Given proper structures and decent conditions, this generation is more than ready to do so: It is ready to follow through.

5. There isn't time to learn everything in school. Like an iceberg, perhaps only one tenth of what you'd like to be able to do and know. The rest comes later.

The school and its world is sometimes called a ghetto, a world out of touch with its surroundings.

Not just because teachers and students go there in the morning, staying inside until they disperse in all directions in the afternoon. But also because what you are made to learn has no relevance for many students. Neither, most likely, for some teachers.

In a situation like that you forget almost entirely what it is like to learn something of value. The stagnant state is the state of things you get used to.

And in this situation your expectations mushroom. Probably more than warranted.

It may then be difficult to remember that school attendance comprising a short span of time can only be the start of what will have to be continued for the rest of your life.

6. Only Adam, at first, was alone in the world. All the rest of us are here together.

Fellowship or collectivism if you wish isn't a modern, smart way of life or a status promoting gimmick in the wake of the student movement. Nor is it bound up closely with any trend, hippie culture or any other phenomenon possessing the common characteristic that they will not survive the era that gave rise to them.

At CICD we do not make fellowship the pivot of teaching and living because “we might as well”. We make it so because we cannot have a school without it. Profound knowledge of fellowship can be learned only in fellowship. Solidarity only by standing shoulder to shoulder. Only many together can solve problems that need the joint efforts of many together to be solved.

Development is brought about only through the influence of great numbers of people. Generations have learned that the world changes only when many people take part in changing it.

And this doesn't exclude the individual. On the contrary, it makes you the decisive link in the chain that connects the present with the past and the future.

7. The things you learn should be put to use. Now, if possible – so that others may learn from you. Possibly later, as the occasion arises. What you have learned you learn twice as well by teaching it to others.

The entire question of what is, after all, the use of the things you learn in school is a sensitive one. Replies such as, “you are going to need it when you grow up”, “just you wait

and see, you will need it some day, I am sure”, and “you’ll need it for your exams” are quite common.

Other replies may be closer to the truth. Such as “The things you learn are to make you suited to go to work some place and do as you are told. Make you deserve your pay”. Or “What you learn is meant to enable you to participate in the parliamentary democracy”.

Another reply is given infrequently: “The things you learn you must use to advance reasonable demands for change in the world, to make it more like what you think it should be”.

At CICD the answer is this: “You must teach others. The things you have learned should benefit others as well. You must learn in order to be able to take a stand and to make things happen. And you and others must jointly decide what would be useful to learn and how to go about it.”

8. You have to be mobile, then you will encounter many things. Otherwise, things come to a halt – even though your eyes are starting out of your head . From just one place you can’t see far.

If you stay inside the school at all times, you don’t see far. A school needs vehicles, students must be able to move around in the city, the country and the world.

This takes money – and in our budgets we have allocations for these things. In the budget of a school you can read of the activities preferred by the teachers - you can discern their pedagogy.

If you can see that the amounts set aside for transport are but small – then you may be quite sure this hasn’t been a matter of much interest to the people drawing up the budget. To us it is important. We want to be mobile – and encounter many things. Otherwise everything comes to a halt.

9. All this applies to teachers, too.

“Dear teacher, dear colleague, dear students

You must go exploring to be able to acquire new ideas – and you must explore further to form better ideas. You still have much to learn. That is why you must try to get close to the things you want to learn about. The closer you get, the more you get out of it.

Your ingrown habits won’t put you on the track of the new things you must learn. You – in the company of your colleagues and your students – must be the driving force in the work to learn much more. It isn’t the old tricks that should put you on your toes. Life is too important for that.”