

THE MANAGEMENT OF SCHOOLS (5): IMPORTANCE OF EVALUATION

Modern pedagogy gives considerable importance to evaluation of results and of the knowledge and skills acquired. And rightly so, for it is a means of finding out the precise nature of the learning process and the efficacy of the conditions in which it is carried on. Methods of evaluation may vary with the school situation and take on forms more or less complex according to the nature of the knowledge and skills acquired.

The importance of evaluation has been confirmed by the appearance recently of the science of docimology, or evaluation of what has been acquired.

Such refinement is, obviously, not to be found in the "Management of Schools" but I think it interesting to look at the evaluation system proposed therein.

QUESTIONING AND CHECKING

Reading through the first part of the "Management" we can distinguish five forms of questioning or testing during the learning process.

★ **Questioning during the Course of Work** to make sure that the pupils understand what they are learning. We find several examples of this in the passages devoted to arithmetic, spelling and training in sharpening the pens (quills). This attention to understanding by the pupils is continuous in the "Management". From among various passages we could quote let us take this:

"The Master will insist that the pupils, whose spelling mistakes he has corrected, rewrite the work neatly at home making the corrections he has indicated, and he will check when next he corrects their exercises that they have, in fact, done this work". (p. 74)

★ **Questioning to Stimulate the Pupils.** This is for the purpose of finding out if the pupils are paying attention to the lesson and profiting from the efforts of their companions.

"The Master will, from time to time, question some of the pupils following the same lesson to make sure they are attentive and that they understand". (p. 71)

★ **Questioning at the End of the Lesson** to check the extent of acquisition and comprehension:

"When a pupil has learned all the lines of the alphabet chart, before beginning the syllables, he will continue to the end of the month to study the entire alphabet of which he will be required to read all the letters at random, in order to ascertain whether he knows them all; and he will not advance further until he knows them perfectly". (p. 26)

★ **Monthly Revision** before promotion to a higher grade or section.

"In order that no teacher may be mistaken in regard to the fitness of his pupils for promotion, all the teachers will examine, towards the end of each month, on a day fixed by the Brother Director or the Inspector of Schools, those pupils in all grades and in all sections who should be ready for promotion at the end of the month". (p. 21)

★ **Monthly Test:** At the end of each month the tests arranged will allow the teacher to find out in the grades and sections:

- those who are fit to move to a higher level
- those whose attainment is doubtful
- those who are not ready for promotion.

The final decision is left to the Inspector of Schools who carries out another test if he thinks it necessary. In order to prepare the pupils for this final test the teacher will give them a quick preliminary test.

"The teacher will give to each pupil proposed for promotion a lesson to study to see if, in fact, he is ready for the section to which he is to be promoted. If the change is to take place in the afternoon he will do so that morning. If in the morning then he will give the test the previous afternoon". (p. 23)

MONTHLY PROMOTIONS

★ Attention to the individual and to the group

Frequent change was a powerful stimulant to the pupil who was regularly informed of his progress and his capabilities. Encouraged in this way to keep working and to do better, he was in a position to keep his parents informed of his progress. This was the individual aspect of the evaluation.

But the change over to simultaneous teaching in the Brothers' schools called for attention to the group-class. The group could be enriched and stimulated by the presence of pupils normally capable of promotion to a higher level but whom it was desirable to retain for the sake of the others. This called for a delicate choice between the legitimate interests of the individual and the desire to help the group.

"The teacher will take care, some time before the day on which the promotions are to be made, to inform those pupils whom the Brother Director or the Inspector has agreed not to promote — either for their own good, because they are too young, or for the good of the group or grade, in order that there be some who can support the others. They will do this in such a manner that these pupils will be content to remain in the grade or section where they are".

They will persuade them by means of some reward, by assigning to them some office, such, for example, as Head of the Class and making them understand that it is better to be first or among the first in a lower grade than last in a higher grade. (p. 23)

★ An Important Arrangement

These frequent and regular promotions introduced an important element of mobility into the internal organization of the classes since each class contained several sections or grades. It was important to keep account of these different changes in order to follow the progress of each pupil in the school. In the large classes of the time that meant heavy additional monthly work for each teacher: lists of "Changes of Section" and lists of "Changes of Grade".

The "Management of Schools" gives model lists to ensure uniformity of procedure among the teachers.

Opposite the name of the pupil, the date of his admission to and promotion from the section or grade was entered. The teacher also entered on the list some remarks concerning the behaviour of the pupil: how often he came late, if he were absent without permission, if he did not know the diocesan catechism.

All this information was collated by the Inspector of Schools. We have already noted the key role he played in the decisions to promote or not promote pupils.

CONCLUSION

No official examination, no entrance examination to another scholastic establishment, no external standard obliged the Brothers to carry out these monthly evaluations, the organization of which imposed a heavy and complex task on the teachers.

That can be explained and justified, and it is important to say so, only by the dual objective of care for the pupil and for the effectiveness of the teaching given: care to keep the child regularly informed about his work and progress as well as the desire for efficiency so that parents might have no reason to complain of the school or to think that their children were wasting their time there.

By its frequency and its extension to the whole process of learning, that system of evaluation became continuous. Is that not what we consider today the most satisfactory system?

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