

The Education of a “Petit Prince” for All of Our Children

Introduction

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the future kings of France, such as Francis I and the young Louis XIV, received a well-rounded, liberal education to prepare them for their future roles. They learned Latin, Italian, English, French, and were active in all of the arts. They were well-versed in the Latin classics as well as in the literature of their day. They were knowledgeable in mathematics and science. Practicing sports and the martial arts, they were accomplished public speakers and could express themselves eloquently in writing.

Why has the ideal of the princely education for our young rulers of the past all but disappeared for our children among educators today?

Shouldn't each child be educated as a “Little Prince,” including all aspects of education which molded the “Renaissance man”? Education today, unfortunately, is all too often throttled by premature specialization.

1. Opening the mind to all kinds of intelligence

- **Rational common sense and sensitivity.** Education today focuses much too much on turning out future specialists and technicians. It should, on the contrary, prepare our “Little Prince” to be well-integrated in society and capable of adapting to the changes of the twenty-first century.

- **Theory and application.** Education today is far too theoretical. It must become more in tune with real solutions in the real world.

- **Opening to other cultures and foreign languages.** Speaking foreign languages is indispensable in opening oneself to other cultures. The learning of foreign languages should begin early, together with the learning of one's native language. Formulating one's thoughts in another language contributes greatly, in itself, to a child's intellectual acuity.

- **Learning from others.** In the real world, the “Little Prince” must learn not only from his teacher but also from all inter-personal relationships.

2. Practicing the “basics” as well as acquiring high-tech skills

A firm grasp of the basics in nature and science goes hand-in-hand with mastering state-of-the-art technology. Both together are essential in cultivating the imagination and encouraging creativity.

- **Respecting “Mother Nature:”** the “Little Prince” must become actively involved in saving the planet and wary of the ravages of short-term measures in ecology.

- **Becoming conscious of the repeating cycles in nature and living harmoniously within them:** a healthy balance between the sciences and philosophy.

WEAK, PERHAPS TO BE ELIMINATED?

-The seasons: a cyclical concept of time, between natural observation and poetry, wisdom, Buddhism...

-The four elements in ancient Greece: air, earth, water, and fire; the fifth element in China: wood.

.Birth, life and death

- **Mastery of the body:** the human body as a measure of life and the world. Leonardo da Vinci’s concept of the body. The “Little Prince” must become aware of his own body and strive for both physical strength and beauty.

- **Familiarity with digital technology:** learning arithmetic, geometry, the use of computers, mastery of visual imagery in photography and video technology; becoming conscious of the place of the individual in space and the cosmos.

3. Developing memory

Submerged in a sea of easy access to information through technology, modern man tends to forget the works of humanity. Through modern pedagogy, the “Little Prince” must learn to develop his own memory.

- **Learning by acting:** theatre, cinema, dance. Every school must become a center for learning in the arts.

- **Learning through the recognition and comparison of images:** art history. Opening the mind of the “Little Prince” to an “imaginary museum” of the history and art of past and present civilizations.

- **Developing a clear notion of pivotal periods in world history and memorizing important dates:** acquiring a global vision of history and awareness of events marking social change throughout the world.

- **Learning by heart the important texts from all great civilizations**

- **Learning the rules of grammar**

4. Learning by creating

Education today must not lose sight of its ultimate goal – namely, helping our “Little Prince” to become a conscious future member of society. A child realizes himself as a person in working with both his mind and his hands.

- **Developing a critical sense by comparing great doctrines, philosophies, and religions:** The “Little Prince” must evolve within a non-sectarian world which refuses all theocratic systems – a world which, nonetheless, permits him to compare different systems of thought and religion. This, needless to say, presupposes an in-depth study of the history of great doctrines, philosophies, and religions.

- **Learning by being in contact with artists:** Our “Little Princes” must be initiated to all of the arts: music, song, sculpture, theater, cinema, photography, drawing, architecture, poetry, and dance. The artist must be welcome in the classroom, working together harmoniously with the teacher.

- **Educating through project development:** The “Little Prince” must learn in developing his own projects. This, in itself, is certainly one of the most ambitious pedagogical reforms for the twenty-first century. Instead of learning by rote and repetition, the “Little Prince” must learn by hands-on involvement in his own projects. He must finally present his projects to the public and accept their being evaluated.

Learning through projects stimulates the acquisition of all basic skills. The “Little Prince” must learn to work as a member of a team on group projects. This training is indispensable for his future work as an adult.

5. Self-expression and communication

- **Oral expression:** Acting and singing are important in learning to be listened to and understood. The “Little Prince” must learn to work with his peers in small groups.

- **Communication:** listening, debating, speaking convincingly, and mastering the art of dialectics

- **Learning foreign languages:** at least two foreign languages as of age 3 or 4. Developing new methods for learning languages which focus on everyday communication rather than literature. Training language teachers in these new methods. Inviting children of the target language into the classroom.

- **Mastering high-tech tools in communication:** internet, television, photography, cinema, and video. Our “Little Prince” must become a journalist and reporter, an observer,

someone who dares to express himself, a critic, and someone who can clearly state his position – in short, a citizen of the world.

6. Learning step-by-step

• **Personalized step-by-step learning: a key issue**

Our “Little Prince” must be at ease in the world as an individual as well as a member of society. Learning must be adapted personally to his individual strengths and weaknesses – acceleration where possible and more time spent on what he finds difficult. Training must be adapted to his individual needs in function of his age. However, his training must, nonetheless, be organized in reaching recognizable milestones. Our “Little Prince” must master the given skills of each phase before passing on to the next. He must not skip any of the linking steps in the learning process.

• **Starting at an early age: kindergarten**

Our “Little Prince” should get used to going to school as early as possible. Spending a part of the day outside the family “independently” is an essential step in growing up. Giving under-privileged children a “head-start” in school may often avoid later setbacks. Giving everyone an equal chance to succeed must become a basic democratic principle in all education.

• **Three strategic ages**

The “Little Prince” at eleven: He already understands and speaks two foreign languages (one of which should be English), as well as his native language. He can read and write in his native language. He has mastered the basics in arithmetic. He is at ease at the computer. He can do searches on the internet. He can paint, sculpt, sing, and play at least one instrument. He can recite poetry by heart. He can swim and run.

The “Little Prince” at fourteen: He has already had several stays abroad for practicing his foreign languages. He is beginning to write short essays. He has chosen an area of literary and artistic expression. He is at ease in math and science. He is autonomous on the internet. He can compile a dossier on a particular subject. He is able to organize his work by himself under occasional supervision. He practices a specific sport, either group or individual.

The “Little Prince” at eighteen: A young adult, he has already spent a year abroad participating in an exchange-program. He speaks one foreign language fluently and can manage in one or more others. He can express himself clearly in writing in his native language as well as in his first foreign language. He can make oral presentations and participate in public debates. He can work alone independently. He can work together with teachers who have become his mentors. He has chosen a subject of research and specialization, literary or scientific. He has an idea of what he would like to do professionally later in life. He has overcome the physical and psychological strains of adolescence.

