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## **The principles of non-formal, free education on the examples of schools described by David Gribble in Worlds Apart and Lifelines**

### **Introduction**

Global and nationwide changes encourage people to look at the teaching in a new way, to set up a new school reality and teacher's professional function at school. There is often observed "*frustration of traditional value systems as well as seeking, discovering and locating them in the world, relativism, cult of money, dehumanization of family and community life*". Moreover, there is often mentioned about devaluation of universal values, "*economic crise, increase in mass consumption, egocentrism and mass culture*" (T. Szkudlarek 2010, p.120). There is seen school apartheid which is expanding rapidly. There is the decrease in the quality of investments and financial support in education.

In this circumstances students need successful schools which develop naturally in response to particular social and financial school problems in many backgrounds. There is need to employ professional teachers who have not only academic knowledge and competences, but also "*the sphere of needs, emotions and values together with awareness of interaction with students*" (T. Szkudlarek, 2010, p.129). "*Teacher professionalism encompasses the realm of thought and sense of accomplishment that pertain to knowledge acquisition and skill practice as well as the realm of feelings and values*" (H. Kwiatkowska, Pedeutologia, 2008, p.170). As a result "*Children will appreciate it (teacher's work and devotion) despite everything*" (B. Śliwerski, *Author's Education*, 2008, p.235). It means that after time

they know how much they see their lives from different perspectives. It is due to the fact they have acquired the sense of freedom and security. They are satisfied with their school results, have a great sense of responsibility and try to plan their future lives.

### **The rules of libertarian schools**

The main emphasis is based on a learning community, in which all its members –pupils, teachers, non-teaching staff and parents create a true learning community. They all accept a set of values which “reflect the nature of learning itself”(D. Gribble, 2006, p.1). As a general rule they encourage enjoyment and full participation in school life. Moreover, they prefer an equality of worth and ensure that the main aim of school is teaching and recognizing the different responses between individual students according to their worth, values and consideration. Apart from this, they differentiate accessibility of balanced curriculum, which is accessible to all students regardless of gender, race and abilities, even if they have special educational needs.

Every pupil in example, in Teesdale School, according to school’s basic philosophy, presented in *Worlds Apart* book, has the right to “feel happy and secure as an individual and to have a full and uninterrupted education”. Moreover, he or she can tell about personal problems to adults, who work at school. It is unacceptable that students are the victims of bullying. Their own belongings are kept safe and secure. Students can “voice their opinion politely and have a fair hearing” (D. Gribble, 2006, p.6). The main aim in Charterhouse School, which philosophy presented Gribble in his book, is to stimulate intellectual curiosity by independent enquiry. What is more school influences positively on spiritual awareness of students to promote solo work and group work with the sense of friendship and duty. Moreover in Summerhill School they have the main aim to “*provide an environment in which children can define who they are and what they want to be*”( D. Gribble, 2006, p.7).

### **School facilities and academic work in Summerhill School**

A. S. Neill, a Scottish teacher, who was a founder of Summerhill School in 1921, wanted to set up a community in which children were “free from adult authority” (D.Gribble, 2006, p.7). The school was surrounded by twelve acres of garden and woodland, with separated places for tree house building, climbing, walking, camping, bonfires, sunbathing, cycling and other imaginative games. During summer time there was open swimming pool, a tennis court, basketball area and pool table. Furthermore, the school was equipped with a Study Room with computer and web connection and still growing library of CDs.

General Policy Statement in Summerhill School allow children to be free from compulsory assessment and give them the freedom in context of developing their own goals and sense of achievement. Every term students create their own new timetable satisfying their educational needs. This school does not force students to study hard to exams. They are not a factory of “exam results”(D. Gribble, 2006, p.13). The lessons are not compulsory, they are optional. As the result, students are able to choose between the right to study and the right to play. It is a type of boarding school and students are able to study without teacher’s permission.

Physical Education gives students the widest range of activities. All of them are voluntary and there is no existing system of testing students. The discipline is kept by the School Meetings. Children are taught to have their own feelings of morality. Students have to address to staff as “Miss” or “Sir”. They have to stand when an adult enter the classroom. They cannot wear coats during lessons. They are obliged not to chew gums, eat and drink during lessons.

After finishing Summerhill School Summerhillians can choose different educational and non-educational possibilities and careers. They can obtain Master’s degree, BAs, PhDs or start working. The Summerhill school leavers become: “artists, writers, musicians, professors, scientists, doctors, bankers and business owners” (D. Gribble, 2006, p.15).

### **Schools from book Lifelines**

The education is being described on pages of this book as “progressive, free, child-centered, democratic, liberal and non-authoritarian”( D. Gribble, 2004, p.1). The author has chosen four schools which present the natural response to current school problems. The first school is the Barns Hostel. It is situated close to Edinburgh in Scotland.

D. Gribble reveals story of David Wills and his devotion to school due to the three reasons. Firstly, it shows the disturbed children and the usage of non-authoritarian methods. Secondly, it “ shows that such methods are not a refuge for weak staff” (D. Gribble, 2004, p.3), who cannot cope with misbehaving students and thirdly David Wills claims that this method is successful. In this school there were observed students with accumulation of different symptoms like: backwardness, tardiness, indecency, tantrum temper, stealing, “dishonesty”, housebreaking, truancy, “unmanageable”, ‘wild”, “beyond control”, lying, wandering, destructiveness, cruelty, begging and enuresis. They needed special school treatment because backwardness was the main symptom in the majority of boys.

To show the level of the existing problems, Willis in a report for the Scottish Council Research in Education: Evacuation Survey in 1942, gave the following statistics “ *55 boys have so far been admitted, 18 of 36 from Edinburgh are known to have had Police court experience. Most of the remaining 18 appear to have been evacuated to avoid the Court*” (Gribble, 2004, p.11). Such words like “dangerous”, hopeless case, incorrigible were used to describe boys in reports about them. Moreover, the IQs level of 31 boys had been checked and it had revealed the following results. In this group only free boys had IQ higher than 100, 13 boys were between 9- to 99, 7 boys had IQ from 80 to 89 and the final group of 8 boys was at the level from 70 to 79.

### **The Theoretical and Practical Approach in The Barns Hostel**

David Wills revealed to David Gribble that it was “ *God’s will that they should show affection towards children, and that one aspect of this duty is to reject the use of the punishment*” (D. Gribble, 2004, p.12). He used term “shared responsibility” in form of democracy at school. He mentioned about order in the community of students. He did not agree for misunderstanding and resentment between students. “ *But if the decision is arrived at as the result of a discussion among peers, he may at least understand the reason for it*” (W. D. Wills, 1945, p. 81).

There was used a house meeting in Barns Hostel once a week for making important decisions. Will was sure about that jurisdiction must be absolute. According to Will, it is better to limit children’s responsibility to something very small, than to get them responsibility veto decision, which they can use when they need.” Shared responsibility is a means by which children may learn that socially acceptable behavior is demanded of them not only as a result of adult prejudices, but also by their peers(D. Gribble, 2004, p.14).

David Wills claimed that children “must feel themselves to be loved. *It consists of loving to this misbehaving Tommy Green in spite of all that, of making him feel that this affection is always there, is something on which he can absolutely rely, which will never fail, whatever he may do*” ( D. A. Wills, The Barns Experiment, p. 64). What is more he repeated many times that children “must be loved in order that they may learn to love. That is not only Christian teaching, it is sound of modern psychology” ( D. A. Wills, p.79). There were many visitors in the Barns Hostel. One of them, Frank Mathews told that there were not a trace of Institution. The students and staff were friends in this school. There are not any punishments, there are consequences instead of them. If students during meals misbehave they are sent to another places to eat until they are ready to behave in appropriate way. David Gribble used the official report to the Finance and Executive Committee in December 1943 in which Dr. Burns described the election of “*a President and vari-*

*ous Ministers for different purposes such as Routine, Justice and Recreation”*( D. Gribble, 2004, p.26).

## **History of Doctor Pedro Albizu Campos Puerto Rican High School**

The school started in Chicago in 1972. The founders of the school were students, not adults with philosophy of lives, who had been expelled from previous high schools. David Gribble described history of the first Puerto Ricans in the United States. At the beginning they were forced to live in “*ghettoes in New York and Chicago, where they worked in dead-ends jobs for minimal wages. Puerto Rico has never become part of the USA, it remains a colony*” (D. Gribble, 2004, p. 39).

They had been living in areas close to Humboldt Park in the north-west part of Chicago and they were kept out of the rest of the city. They wanted to use their own language Spanish and they began to study at universities, start their hospitals and medical treatment to take care of themselves. The students who wanted to obtain secondary education attended the local High School in Tuley. There were learning whites with criminal stories, too. Many of the students were taking drugs, drinking alcohol and had family problems. During the first years of the school curriculum was guided by the wishes of the students. They started “*demonstrations against abuses of human rights and they became active members of the Puerto Rican community*” ( D. Gribble, 2004, p.42).

David Gribble attended the school in 1999 and wrote about racism and gangs. There were two main gangs in Chicago, the Folks and the People. If you are a member of one gang you are outlawed from the area of another. Girls who join gangs sometimes have to submit to multiply rape and it may have repetitions. If you refuse to join to them, they can beat you as you change your mind. If you are a gangbanger you should have a gangster’s mentality;” *You kill one of mine, I gotta kill two of yours*” ( D. Gribble, 2004, p.45). What is more,



there is some kind of gang culture at school according to Marvin Garcia, the principal of the school. It is very common for girls to have nice clothes, good quality gym shoes, a nice dress making your own money bringing money to drug dealers. On the other hand, they as a group of teachers want to help students to take control of their lives and to get out of gangs. They encourage them to go to universities, but it is very difficult.

The author of *Lifelines* had visited the school inside and “*found the school informal, friendly and full of laughter. When the students arrive in the morning, greetings include hugs and kisses for staff as well as fellow students. Discussions tend to be noisy, because everyone has an opinion and they want to make their opinions heard*” (D. Gribble, 2004, p.49). He claimed that school helped to build students’ self-respect. As student Andreina Colon said “*I like how they teach here if you don’t understand something you can ask questions and the teacher will explain it to you. She will answer my question, we will talk about it or discuss it, it is not like in other schools. I like it. I like all the teachers*” (D. Gribble, 2004, p. 55). Next pages of the book present us the principal Marvin Garcia’s opinions about the educational ideas based on this approach. It is significant if students ask questions, they are a part of a process, which transforms the reality. They participate as a school in demonstrations to help financially youth in needs, they create programs which raise students’ awareness about HIV and AIDS.

There are visible positive results for students like the motivation is at higher level than it used to be f. e. Esmeralda, one of 16 years old students with small child, want to study at university to be a doctor. Moreover, students can come to school and say what is wrong at school and what they want to change. What is more, teachers, according to students’ opinions, look only at their good points. To sum up one of students described this school as” *that’s public school and here in this school I got a chance to be myself, I don’t have to hide nothing. And I am truly myself*”( D. Gribble, 2004, p.64).

### **Moo Baan Dek, Thailand**

The founders of the third school described in book *Lifelines* were Rajani and Pibhop Dhongchai. The school started in 1979. Rajani described step by step the origins of the schools' philosophy in 1981. *"According to Buddhist belief, each human being possesses within him/herself both love and high instincts, that is –primitive instincts and perfect, human virtue. High instincts originate from knowledge and wisdom, having kindness as its driving force"*. Rajani wanted to *"cultivate wisdom and kindness into the human heart while reducing ignorance and vice, so that life led to ultimate aim, being in harmony with nature and having wisdom as life's guide and kindness as its inspiration"* (Cowhey E. Undomittipong P.1997).

The school used the model of Summerhill school in Suffolk in England with its freedom and self-government. The school philosophy was based on freedom to choose to learn and relationship between adults and children based on equality and mutual respect. Moreover, the founders believed in the healing power of natural surroundings. They claimed that around school should be a river or at least a pool to give students opportunity to play in water. They observed therapeutic effects of fresh water and growing plants on emotionally disturbed children. Furthermore, they provided support of this treatment with *"dancing, singing, acting in plays and enjoying art"*(D. Gribble, 2004, p.70).

There is an equal relationship between students and teachers. In Buddhist tradition, in the community of monks, each monk has the same equal position regardless of caste and race. Moreover, learning can start only when students are ready and become self-motivated to do it. Rajani has practically enlarged the ways of creating self-motivation in group of students. That is why she started to work with teachers to help them to motivate their students. *"We help the students to have faith in the adults and to trust the adults, and once they trust the adults, the adults can help them to do something. We keep trying to provide a good creative media"* (D. Gribble, 2004, p.78). What is especially important in era of computer games and the Internet addictions among teenagers.



Students, who study there cannot believe that there is enough food for everybody and they eat three meals a day. They get a shelter, “*two sets of clothes and medical treatment when they need it*”. There is a hierarchical system of schooling. There are existing eleven different words for “*you all indicating different status*”. There is a word “*krengjai*, which means consideration for feelings of others, when it is applied to attitudes towards superior, it includes obedience, humility and respect” (D. Gribble, 2004, p.79).

### **Butterflies in Delhi**

The students of this school are working children who are forced by their parents to work. If they do not earn enough money they are beaten. The second part of school creates “*not only poor, under-privileged and working to survive. The commonest job is rag-picking, which means collecting litter from streets into sacks, and taking it to recycling firms who will buy it*” (D. Gribble, 2004, p.101). Children can also work as shoe-cleaners, porters at the railway stations or as helping people at market stalls. They earn thirty rupees a day, what means about fifty English pence which is enough to buy cheap food for one day and to pay for a night shelter.

David Gribble in *Lifelines* has collected the comments of young researchers about the need of education in this country among poor children: “*Education is the biggest thing in the world. By studying we can make our futures. ....*” “*Some children cannot study when their parents die. I used to go to school but when my father died I left school because my uncle did not let me study*”.

*“The smakias (drug-dealers) do not like us going and studying”.*

During International Democratic Education Conference in Tokyo in 2000 Amin, who is a fourteen- year-old in street child in Butterflies in Delhi, said that there are various reasons why children come on streets like family breaks down and lack of work. They have many problems with the Police, which blames children for crimes they have not committed. In this situation “*education is the last thing we have in mind. But there are organizations like Butterflies... They have given as*

*our freedom to play, we can go to them and just play, we can keep making drawings, we can go to the children's council meetings and that's where participation becomes important"* ( D. Gribble, 2004, p.103).

The sad story of a small boy growing up in Mumbai slums who becomes a contestant on the Indian version of "Who Wants To Be A Millionaire" is presented in rewarded with Oscars film entitled "Slumdog". He has been under suspicion of cheating, and while being asked questions by the Police Officer events from his life history are presented and it explains why he knows the answers in show. Teachers from Butterflies, like Rita Panicker, are successful if their students trust them, if they write and read, if they achieve their personal goals and find a solution to a problem. Moreover, if they motivate them to get high school education, to study at universities and to find good jobs.

## Conclusion

David Gribble in his two books *World Apart* and *Lifelines* wanted to present his hope for better life for students from poor, addictive and with many social problems backgrounds. He paid attention to accumulation of different symptoms among students (backwardness, tardiness, indecency, tantrum temper, stealing, housebreaking, truancy) who attended non-authoritarian schools. The students were facing abuse, starvation, were tortured, raped and lived over the risk of death.

The positive changes in attitude to education and then to life in context of students are constantly present on almost all pages of the books. It was possible due to free, democratic and progressive ways of teaching students by creating different circumstances. Moreover with help of devoted to this philosophy of education teachers. That was the aim of both books to "*arrange the environment or external factors that would cultivate wisdom and kindness into human heart while reducing ignorance and vice*" ( D. Gribble, 2004, p. 140) as it was done it Pibhop and Rajani Dhongchai , the founders of Moo Baan Dek School in Thai-

land. Furthermore, the teacher's reward was the children's trust as Rita Panicker from Butterflies in Delhi claimed. In addition, children need to be loved what is the statement of David Wills from The Barns Hostel in Manor Valley in Scotland and teachers have to know how to cope with students' problems like in Doctor Pedro Albizu Campos Puerto Rican High School in Chicago in the USA.

To sum up, these two books can help contemporary teachers, head-teachers and parents to solve many of existing school problems at schools. The suggestions and advices will contribute to teachers, students and schools development in the workplace and to changes through new attitudes in teaching.

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