

The Key Thing That Differentiates Ancient and Modern Schoolteachers

In recent years, America's schools have attempted to train teachers of the highest quality. To ensure quality, teachers are trained to know the latest and greatest theories and philosophies in child development, lesson planning, and teaching technique.

But in our rush to educate these teachers in the latest and greatest education philosophies, have we overlooked the most important component of a good teacher?

In his book, [*Norms and Nobility*](#), author and educator David Hicks suggests we have, and he notes a major difference between today's teachers and those in ancient times:

"Yet with a weird logic, today's professional educator argues that mutual learning implies equal ignorance. He substitutes class preparation and teaching technique for knowledge and eros [the emotional commitment necessary for capturing the imagination of his students]. ... He demands that the modern teacher, like himself, become a student of education: inquiring into the nature of the immature mind and mastering the techniques for accommodating it and for making the school's grade exercises and relevant learning experiences tolerable. ..."

In many instances, the modern lesson plan disguises the teacher's embarrassing lack of knowledge... The ideas and beliefs men live for and die with seldom come out of lesson plans, but the lesson plan satisfies the teacher's need for an appearance of knowledge."

By contrast, ancient teachers sought to fill themselves with knowledge of the subject, rather than knowledge of educational theories:

“Classical education challenges both teacher and pupil: the one to justify his superior wisdom and intellectual skill; the other to win his teacher’s praise by matching his performance. The personal element in their learning compensates for the lack of educational psychology, teaching aids, and learning paraphernalia. ... A lively dialectic arises, educating both.”

Is it time we place less emphasis on education philosophies and instead focus on imparting pure and simple knowledge to the next generation of teachers and students?

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