

The Importance of Reform Pedagogy

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The era of educational renewal which began approximately at the end of the last century and seems to be complete as regards the emergence of its great personalities, is generally characterized by its search for more humane forms of teaching. This search, however, has still not ended even today. Nearly all models of reform pedagogy share a common educational aim: to integrate systematic learning and personal experience in an educational process that is free from fear. Studying the five successful models of reform pedagogy which are still widespread today – Montessori pedagogy, Freinet pedagogy, Jenaplan pedagogy, Freinet pedagogy and Rudolf Steiner pedagogy – should enable us to get closer to the above-mentioned aim of a less fearful educational process in Austrian schools, without losing sight of the need for a didactic-methodical base for school learning nor of the social context of schooling in Austria.

When we set out to compare the reform pedagogical concepts under discussion we will on the one hand discover some common characteristics which identify these concepts as a suitable base for permanent school development and on the other hand, we will find specifics which will make it easier for us to choose or lean towards one of the concepts. The main characteristic of all the concepts mentioned here is that they are child-oriented – a notion which above all signals the shift in thinking in the historic sense: it is no longer school and its demands on the child which are at the centre of educational thinking, but the individual child's optimum development and a school which facilitates this development. (Key, Ellen, *Das Jahrhundert des Kindes*, Autorisierte Übertragung, Weinheim 1992)

With regard to a possible opening up of school with the aim of a general school development and educational reform, the reform pedagogical concepts are a didactic-methodical base which serve the process of opening up. The concepts to be discussed are linked to educational principles such as independence, self-education, self-responsibility, self-activity, independent and autonomous learning, exploratory learning, encouraging the development of imaginative skills and social learning. The central aim is to aid the young person in his or her development into an autonomous human being and the development of his or her individuality.

Without laying claim to completeness, we find further constituting and descriptive characteristics of reform pedagogical concepts in the creation of a stimulating learning environment, interdisciplinary teaching, giving the child ample opportunities to have a say, offering so-called development materials,

