

## TUTORIAL *PRAXIS* IN SINGLE-SEX EDUCATION

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Our purpose here is to explain the tutorial *praxis* tutorial as carried out at Colégio Pineda, where I teach, seeking to achieve the comprehensive improvement of students, in collaboration with parents.

We will explain efforts undertaken to use personal and individual based student tutoring in order to obtain this improvement, together with parents, who are key components in schools organized around single-sex education, and concretely in the Pineda School during the forty years of its history.

The historian and teacher José Luís González has dedicated his entire professional life to education. His graduate work at the Institute of Education in London led him to transfer the Anglo-Saxon tutorial method to single-sex education in Spain.

Thanks to him, this method has been introduced into some schools in Spain. The method that he transferred seeks to study in depth and to achieve improvement of the character and personality of students, rather than concentrating on the mere transmission of knowledge. It gives priority to responsible freedom – not theoretically, but rather through making

the concept live. This involves the entire organization of the school and of the faculty, who must clearly understand the criteria employed and act together as a united group.

The technique utilized encourages the active participation of students, involving them in everything taking place in the school as a way of fostering their learning.

“The essence of education is to encourage growth, developing to the greatest extent the possibilities of each student. This is what it means to educate. It is a task that involves helping. In short, a well exercised tutorial presupposes a more effective help aimed at the comprehensive personality development – intellectual, moral, affective, and civic – of students. When one considers teaching and learning, through the communication established between teacher and student, each will know the other better and they can enter into free dialogue in order to discover the most appropriate path for the student’s future – as a person, as a professional, as a social and civic being, and as a Christian, when that is the student’s faith”.<sup>1</sup>

Thanks to the experience, study, and participation of José Luís González-Simancas, the personal tutor approach is used in single-sex schools, based on the freedom of and trust in students, together with the participation of families.

Thanks to his experience in other schools in which José Luís González-Simancas had given classes, the Colégio Pineda was founded in 1968, before the establishment of the General Education Law.

“There three things that are important in the school: first, the parents; second, the teachers; and third, the students. If a school gives priority to this scheme, it will be able to impact students, and given that this is what is sought, it is primarily in the interest of parents that this occurs. After parents come the teachers, for their professional competence and their life experiences will have an impact on students.

Communication with parents is very important at the school, and quarterly interviews serve this purpose, in order

for their children to perform at their best. But is this achieved? Does the tutor/student relationship work, with both being of the same gender? In today's world, does the family serve as an aid for students? We will see the answers to these questions in what follows here.

A key element of this school is education with freedom: respecting freedom, given that there is no true education without personal responsibility; nor responsibility without freedom. Students are trusted, and education is seen as a service. These characteristics define teaching within the school: freedom, trust, and service.

We need to look at teaching and curricula from another perspective: "the defects of the official curriculum are many, and some are of special importance. Basically it is a curriculum that was created without taking into account the progressive development of children, in terms of psychology, interests, skills, etc.; nor for the kind of human being that one wishes to train: Christians by conviction, free, responsible, with judgment and virtue, respecting the truth, with broad interests, compassionate and universal".<sup>2</sup>

Currently, the TUTORIAL ACTION PLAN takes into account the characteristics of adolescents and attempts to bring together students, families, and teachers. A key undefined characteristic has been the type of human being that one seeks; or better said, it has not been possible to arrive at the same concept. Perhaps the intent is to "manipulate" or convert the adolescent into a Teddy bear, sought after by a media-driven society, merely resolving conflicts but not able to have an impact on his or her personality.

At the Pineda School, the characteristic of the adolescent student that stands out is the confidence that she acquires through tutoring. This derives from the relation between student and tutor. Each (both teacher and student) is treated by her first name. During these confidential conversations the student learns how to study, fostering in her a sense of respon-

sibility. Difficulties are lessened because tutors closely accompany their students. For adolescents it is easier to open up to persons of the same sex. One might say that the adolescent girl sees the teacher merely as a friend of her mother.

It is important that virtues be taught, because they temper the will and facilitate self-control. “A man cannot be measured only by what he knows; but by what he wants and by his determination to have it”.<sup>3</sup> Teachers are told: “Teach young people the difficult art of being able to finish things. Accustom them to effort, because it is the surest guarantee for their future”.<sup>4</sup> This effort is obtained most quickly when the adolescent sees the tutor with the same characteristics, man or woman, according to case.

During group tutoring sessions, one seeks to foster human virtues in order to contribute to character and personality training. “In order to create basic habits of discipline that demand a training of the will, propose to students throughout the course a series of objectives for character training”.<sup>5</sup>

There are two fundamental virtues that are taught to put into practice beginning in primary school and that are inculcated throughout the program: sincerity and loyalty. The objective of the tutor shall be to aid students in acquiring these virtues. And how is this done? Above all, knowing how to carry out activities that help the group/class to view things in depth, and they help each other. For this reason it is good to deal with students of the same sex, so that they may be more open to tutoring. The support of parents is essential – meeting with them before working with the students in order to determine what virtues are to be cultivated. The tutor will personally talk with the student every three weeks to attempt to establish and stimulate the goals proposed.

The objective is to train the person as a whole; one who will know how face with personal responsibility the concrete demands of her life. This methodology is different from the traditional French one – which is rationalist and verbal in ori-

gin, and tends more toward the Anglo-Saxon model, which is more practical in nature.

The group is studied in depth, and their causal factors (conflictual family situations, or students who present some serious problem), with the objective of character and personality education, without being limited to a mere transmission of knowledge. That is, this consists of seeing to it that the student participates in the life of the school and in her own educational process.

In summary, “the teacher is aware of being an educator – and we always return to this – of the complete personality of her students, and not only the intellectual facet. She should be concerned with the individual knowledge of her students, observing them closely, living with them (...) .

At the same time, she should also know them as components of a group and assume its leadership. Third, she is the teacher of a subject matter the teaching of which should be used to train the personality of her students”<sup>6</sup> This last characteristic is essential when all teachers know how to education within the subject that they teach. In this manner, the adolescent will rapidly acquire new habits.

For Massó, adolescence is the crucial moment of education in freedom. “Provide abundant ideas in order to guide teachers who train young people of these ages. The key to success is having cordial relations between teacher and student; relations that should develop in an atmosphere of close friendship, with the student wanting to be responsible without reticence, distrust, or coercion. This is always possible when the teacher is of the same gender as the student”<sup>7</sup>.

The Pineda School seeks to provide the kind of individualization that should characterize the education system. In 1968, the school began to use this individual approach, keeping in mind what we stated above – to provide comprehensive education through inter-subjective, person-to-person communication, which is always when the parties are of the same gender.

Each group of students has a teacher responsible for the course, besides having a tutor for each. This is of great importance, since it is the latter who coordinates educational activities with parents. The work of the individual tutor is based on friendship and trust. Building ties of friendship with adolescents is not an easy task, due to differences in age and the prudent distance that should separate teacher and student. Such friendship is established naturally when both teacher and student are of the same gender.

The combination of demand and friendship is difficult to establish when there are no demands in the student's home. Often, the attitude that the tutor takes is one of demand in the classroom, fair and hard on everyone. However, in interviews one finds that the tutor is friendly and understanding, knowing how to position herself vis-à-vis the student, because the tutor has gone through the same situation as the student.

In the past, these personal interviews of tutor/student took place between classes, but it proved impossible to continue in this way. Currently, interviews take place during class time. This fact should not be interpreted as a lack of seriousness or as a trivialization of classes. On the contrary; it emphasizes a priority of the Pineda School system: attention to the student through individualized and differentiated communication.

*A) At the Pineda School, the following are treated systematically:*

1. The tutor is the communication doorway between families and students, the training of whom is the supreme responsibility of the school. Natural friendships are created between teachers and parents, which facilitates the coordination of the two educational environments: the school and the home. The tutor has the mission of guiding the family.

“In regard to the family, the tutor is also the correct person to provide counsel and to stimulate. How many times have we as parents been faced with serious doubts regard how to act in regard to this or that child in the most varied aspects of his or her intellectual and human training? A conversation with the tutor can be decisive. The tutor, knowing one’s child and one’s environment, knows how to control a natural impulse that on certain occasions could be prejudicial to a child’s training. In other cases, the tutor can guide, encourage, and take the measures necessary. To us the parents, more than to any others, what is most important is the best education of our children. Counting on the tutor means being certain of making the right decisions; it means having someone with whom to exchange points of view; it means feeling accompanied in this exciting task of life training for our children”.<sup>8</sup> These words recognize the responsibility of the tutor to support, stimulate, clarify ideas, and above treat the student with understanding and kindness.

2. At first, the frequency of interviews was bi-weekly in order to thus generate a true relationship of friendship between tutor and student. Now they should be thus, but due to the complexity of each student, it wasn’t possible to have bi-weekly interviews because each student required an hour or more, and students only open up when they view the tutor as an equal.
3. The content of interviews cover the entire scope of human reality; that is, students are treated holistically, something that at times still is not possible, because this requires joint work with parents, which isn’t always possible.
4. The tutor is aware of the entire environment of the student to be able to maximize the training and to strengthen attitudes, virtues, and values. There is no doubt that it helps if the tutor is a women, for dealing with girls, and a man, for dealing with boys.

5. The tutor is not involved in resolving problems, but rather seeks to personally guide the student in her five dimensions.
6. The tutor receives constant help from the school, which facilitates the education task. When requested, the Guidance Department always supplies support and the diagnosis of any student faced with any difficulty.

From the beginning, the tutor has been viewed as a teacher who, in a special way, is concerned with the personal development in all of its dimensions – human, spiritual, and not only academic of a particular group of students.

The fact that personal and academic guidance has been established by law was not of importance to the Pineda School, for the institution already used the method. Current TUTORIAL ACTION PLANS seek to approach students in a comprehensive manner, but one can see that in spite of this, they do not approach the whole person.

#### *B). Characteristics of the tutor-student relation*

It is important that students realize that the tutor is available to advise them in everything, and for this, the psychological distance that separates adults from children or adolescents must be spanned. This is achieved by the tutor by being well-informed in regard to the student's interests, family, games, study, sports, friendships, etc.

The personal interview and exchange is based on solid friendship and develops within a climate of sincerity, trust, and loyalty.

Sincerity, allied with authenticity, is a virtue that should be practiced first and foremost by the tutor. She must show herself as she is. "Young people possess a sixth sense, an intuitive ability sufficiently well-tuned to understand what is real and sincere in us, the tutors, and what is rhetoric and affectation".<sup>9</sup>

We seek to trust adolescents. One must emphasize that which is positive in the student, for if not, we end up falling into the limitations of each.

Conversations between tutors and students tend to have a positive tone. Adolescents give great importance to the opinions of others, and are disposed to promptly carry out everything that the tutor says, as long as the student sees in the tutor an attitude of trust, kindness, and respect.

Adolescents consider loyalty to be a supreme virtue, and they have a strong critical spirit. It is vital not to divulge anything negative that the tutor may perceive in a student. The prudence of tutors is essential and of the utmost importance.

For the efficacy of this guidance function at the Pineda School, tutors cannot be part-time personnel, because the work demands extra time for the tutor to truly know her students. In many cases, the tutor seeks to be with her student on week-ends, in another environment, in order to help her and know her better.

The personal interview is of the broadest possible content, and seeks to treat the person in her totality.

“The entire problem lies in the way the tutor is introduced into the intimacy of the other person. I can enter into this intimacy by its natural door, and its own key, which is the truth; or I can enter using artificial means, whether called intrigue, stealth, or demagoguery. I can introduce myself into the intimacy of others for my own benefit, or with the objective of supplying disinterested aid. Here, in these different modes of influence, prohibitions are possible. But in dialogue, a sane influence is always acceptable, in which the truth, valid reason, enriches the other, bringing her closer to me, and constitutes, at the least, intellectual material for her deliberation and free decision”<sup>10</sup> These words make manifest the importance of entering into the intimacy of the student with respect, trust, and freedom.

One attempts to demonstrate affection without being led by natural inclinations. It is very important that the students

feel wanted, for experience demonstrates that all adolescents are disarmed by kindness. It is undoubtedly true they understand this better if they are able to speak with the tutor.

It is important that tutors be familiar with the characteristics of each student in order, in the personal interview, to adopt the correct attitude with each of them. For this reason it is easier and helpful where there is single-sex education, in order to receive the best from every student.

It is usual to offer some guidance in regard to how to help in human training, whatever the character of the individual receiving the guidance.

- Try to create an affectionate, cordial, and kind relationship (in the family and in the school).
- All of the human virtues point toward education.
- Active teaching methods are essential
- Individualized work is a complement to group teaching.
- Small successes should always be emphasized, and effort praised.

The tutor should take into account the right moment to be able to distinguish the difference between temperament and character. “Temperament is the product of interaction of the body and the spirit (that which we designate by instinct and personality affects)”<sup>11</sup> It is more conditioned by genetic factors. A more complete definition: “Temperament is the set of innate inclinations, proper to the individual, resulting from her psychological constitution and intimately linked to biochemical, endocrinal, and neuro-vegetative factors that imprint distinctive traits upon the operative behavior of people”<sup>12</sup> For its part, character is more linked to the spiritual (intellectual-voluntary) sphere that is more malleable through use made of free will and responsibility. It is more linked to environmental, educational, and cultural factors.

Tutoring seeks to mold the character of the student because “character is not spontaneous, given that it assumes that the inferior impulses of man are submitted to the influx of the higher faculties (...). There are people who tend to let themselves be led by their impulses; let’s say that they are “temperamental” individuals. The fact is that they have much temperament and little character. Character has as a first phase the vital basis and after, temperament as an instinctive-affective cover of personality, that is closer to biology”.<sup>13</sup>

One seeks to foster activities that help to develop virtues in the tutoring hours. To this end, it is good to know the character of each student. In this way, the tutor can better help the student and adapt better to her.

One might discuss whether educating for character involves the creation of habits. Perhaps it helps; but it is necessary to study how these sessions might achieve this objective: habits.

## CONCLUSIONS

After presenting this paper on the tutorial activities of ESO, it would be well to recall the most important points that were brought up during my study and my professional experience.

The function of the tutor arose within the British education system beginning in the year 1500, and is currently the most relevant guidance procedure used in single-sex educational institutions. Education guidance involves both theory and practice. Tutoring can also have this dual dimension, even though (just as with guidance intervention) it is more practical than theoretical.

There is no reason that the tutorial activity in schools should be carried out far from the development of education guidance and unaware of the successive innovative contributions of an important sector of pedagogical knowledge. But this, unfortunately, is often the case.

Tutors tend to be accustomed to a particular way of acting, and this suggests a lack of critical self-reflection on their guidance task, without which innovation and improvement is impossible.

Programs, models, and systems help, but are unable to impact upon the most important point of tutorial activity: “the comprehensive training of individuals” they do not include the five human dimensions: social, physical, transcendental, emotional, and rational. There is no doubt, however, that one always acts more on comprehensive training when one puts single-sex education into practice in the classroom, given that the tutor can better understand his or her student due to having experienced these dimensions personally.

In general, going more deeply into the subject, we can draw the following conclusions, thinking about single-sex schools:

1. They seek, using the basis of quality, to assure three changes:
  - a) For students to carry out quality study-tasks .
  - b) For students to learn well whatever they should learn.
  - c) For schools to see to it that all students learn up to their maximum potential.

We seek quality in guidance but the students don't achieve these results. The basic needs of students are not met by schools. This occurs particularly when students and teachers don't view each other as collaborators. A new focus is needed in education and in the implementation of quality in guidance, which involves the help of parents in order to establish good guidance.

2. Different strategies need to be developed if we wish to achieve the desired changes. This is the *quid*. It is a question of more strategies, rather than more content:

- a) Differentiated guidance, adapted to the singularities of those to whom it is directed.
- b) Guidance for the comprehensive development of the personality.
- c) Understand that tutoring is a group task.
- d) Priority attention to parents.
- e) The new identity of the tutor involves: professionalism, the counselor not being unattached from teaching, change agent and instigator of innovative processes in the school, factor of the unity of education in the lives of all students.

3. Planning tutorial activities by phases, cycles, and levels of education, and integrating them into the curriculum of the school is a good technique. We have seen how paths toward achieving chosen objectives have developed through E SO courses and cycles. It would be good to go beyond this in order to detect the real needs of adolescents. A good proposal would be to work in specific groups, developing, according to need, a new TUTORIAL ACTION PLAN and by studying the best way to study habits, through groups and individual examination.

4. In the development phases of the TUTORIAL ACTION PLAN, aspects such as the following should be taken into account:

- Detect guidance needs at each level and establish priority lines of action.
- Determine activities to be carried out, including creating broad programs for the development of capabilities, skills and attitudes.
- Refer activities to different spheres of action (group, individual, families, school faculty).
- Predict how and when to carry out tracking and assessment of each student and of the plan itself.

5. The subject of assessment is a thorny one because currently, assessment is not being carried out based on student outcomes, but rather according to the criteria of the tutor. There is neither control over nor assessment of students, and this makes it impossible to track students adequately.

6. We can project some needs for tutor training related to tutoring activities that we should re-assess:

- Know how to detect and develop a personal guidance style;
- Have a high level of emotional intelligence: development of emotional skills.

7. Meeting the aforementioned needs involves developing a plan that seeks to conform to certain basic training criteria:

- The training offered shall be in accordance with the needs and common problems of teacher-tutors. It is essential that tutors actively participate in the development of the training plan.
- Training shall be based basically on guidance practice itself, carried out in the performance of some professional responsibility.
- Training shall be based on the critical reflection of each teacher-tutor regarding daily guidance practice.
- Training shall be comprehensive and not be limited to theoretical knowledge and the use of techniques; it shall include applied knowledge, as well as the development of professional skills and attitudes.

8. Tutorial action is developed in practice – by the tutor with help from the Department of Studies, the counselor and the rest of the teaching faculty - in three areas:

- a) With the students, individually and in groups.
- b) With the teaching faculty or the teaching team of the group.
- c) With families.

The fundamental objective is to individualize educational activity, to foster knowledge of each and every student, and to contribute to achieving their personal and social maturation through values training.

With this in mind, education shall always be more individualized when the tutor is of the same gender as the student, being able to:

1. Know the personal characteristics of students in order to achieve the maximum potential of the development of their own identities and adjustment of education responses to the capacities, motivations, and interests of each.
2. Collaborate in the search for and application of measures in order to forecast, detect, and respond to the needs of students, fostering responsible attitudes and effort in the face of tasks.
3. Facilitate the integration of all students in the group-class and in the over-all school dynamic, developing attitudes and values that foster a positive and socially integrating climate through respect for the dignity of all people.
4. Inform and aid students in decision-making that respects the most appropriate academic and professional itinerary.

We will once again have to face the need to go beyond the scientific-modern method, the quantifying of reality mathematically, going beyond the transcendental “*bellum*” of reality to the Socratic method, assuring an affectionate dialogue with reality and with others that leads to amorous possession that rejects the possessive domain. With this method, teachers will become specialists in humanity because they will be teachers with virtues. And their students will be stimulated to carry out any activity, because they will discover behind the teacher great humanity and a model to follow.

Tutors should realize that, in order to carry out good tutorial activity, “educating is a synthesis of work, dialogue, and blossoming”.<sup>14</sup> They should work taking into account three realities: a discipline, themselves, and their students. This is a dialogue that demands the humility of being disposed to learning with all; to pardon, to not trust excessively in their own capabilities, and to have a sense of humor. To exercise temperance and strength. Temperance is necessary in order to know how to guide intelligence and avoid curiosity. And strength, in order to carry out the study demanded for the acquisition of virtue. All of this is facilitated when one is speaking of single-sex education.

The tutorial dimension obliges teachers to know each of her students in depth. Personal knowledge leads to the adoption of appropriate methodologies according to needs and possibilities. Tutoring is commonly viewed as an added task, rather than being specific and autonomous. In order to assume the function, one should possess an anthropological view of human beings and be quite clear about the purpose of education. He who knows educates. Everyone should be educated. He who loves educates; for love is the basis of all education.