**Freinet – Modern School Movement**

Freinet is an educational concept that was devised by French educationalist Celestin Freinet (1896-1966).

Freinet was a member of the communist party and this may have influenced his outlook on the educational process. As a teacher, he expounded his theories in the 2nd school he taught in, and his superiors tried unsuccessfully to have him moved elsewhere. Initially he refused to go, until eventually he left to found his own school in Venice.

He joined the French Resistance in 1943. After a period of confinement during the war, he re-established his school promoting his educational theories leading to the founding of the Co-operative Institute of the Modern School (Institut Coopératif de l'Ecole Moderne - I.C.E.M.).

His philosophy was that students should learn by producing resources such as the publications produced by students using their own printing press. He felt that students learned better by directly experiencing ideas within a context and with a set purpose. In this way they were creating formal versions of documents that they had written themselves through free writing (texte libre). By taking a range of pre-existing techniques and methodologies, Freinet was able to devise a system that was itself revolutionary. Freinet devised his system at a time when many other systems had also been developed and as a result Freinet has become less well known than its contemporaries.

Students would work in groups and be encouraged to learn from their mistakes, writing as they went. Collaborative work was encouraged and by using a work schedule (plan de travail) which was negotiated with their teacher and which was used to determine what they were going to do for a set period of time in the future. Using this they were then able to carry out investigations in support of their class work. Fieldwork (sortie-enquête) was used to allow students to leave the confines of the classroom in order to investigate their own environment. Then, when they returned to class, they wrote up their findings, printed them and sent them to other students elsewhere in the country. Furthermore, this would lead to students producing a collective Class Journal (livre de vie) and thence a school newspaper (journal scolaire). It was the case that the publications that students produced were exchanged with other students elsewhere in France and the Freinet Movement as it became known, led to teachers using more advanced technologies such as movie and audio recordings to expound their message.

This child-centred approach to learning ensured that the students were always the focal point of any exercise and that they were heavily involved in any decision-making that took place.

In this way a working class library was created from which students constructed and revised throughout their experiences. They would discuss the text as a class, so that the final outcome was truly a collaborative class effort – somewhat like a Wiki nowadays. Students learned much from being placed in the situation where they had to exert themselves to find out information, rather than passively learning from their teachers. They were given positive feedback to the documents they produced thereby reinforcing their knowledge.

Pupils would also use self-correcting files (fichier autocorrectif) which were worksheets covering such fundamental skills as spelling, humanities and maths. These were used according to their needs in order to improve their performance.

*More information*:

www.slideshare.net/.../celestin-freinet-12696616