

Educating Is Easy... If You Don't Have to Do It Yourself *(Francesco Passafaro)*

Educating is easy.

Everyone thinks so. It's one of those things that, from the outside, always seems perfectly clear: just say the right thing, at the right time, in the right tone. And yet, educating is only easy when you don't have to do it yourself - when you're not involved, when you can afford to judge without staying. Everyone knows how to educate a young person. Especially those who've never had one in front of them for hours. Those who've never had to look them in the eye while they deliberately decide not to listen. Those who've never said "good morning" to a class and received in return a silence so solid it feels organised. And not because they're rude, but because no one has ever taught them that it's worth replying.

I realised educating was complicated the day I attended a perfectly planned educational meeting. Everyone was there: educators, teachers, parents, experts. All thoroughly prepared. One said: "We need more discipline." Another: "No, less discipline." Someone else: "The problem is social media." And then one, with great conviction, declared: "I think we just need to talk to them."

After two hours, we'd decided everything: clear rules, open dialogue, shared strategy. A pedagogical masterpiece. Then the boy walked in. He looked at us, looked at the table, looked at the sheet titled "Educational Plan" and said: "Excuse me... can I go to the toilet?"

End of the educational plan. Three minutes later, he was gone. And we were still there wondering where we'd gone wrong - when the only one who hadn't spoken for two hours had just done the most educational thing of all: he left.

Educating is easy when you're the uncle, the family friend, the one who says, "In my day it was different." A wonderful phrase, because in your day you weren't educating anyone - you were just trying to survive. Educating is easy when you look at a difficult class from the outside, when you're not the one there at eight in the morning, with kids arriving from complicated nights, tired families, neighbourhoods that make noise and demand attention.

Because when you really do it, you understand that educating isn't explaining, isn't commanding, isn't being right. Educating is staying. Staying when someone provokes you, when they answer back, when you feel like saying that phrase that seems harmless but is devastating: "Do what you want." Because often, in their lives, that's exactly what they've always heard.

And then there's always that moment, working with young people, when you think: "Here it is, now I'll say the right sentence. The one that changes everything." You prepare it. You rehearse it in your head. You feel it's powerful, almost moving. You say it. Silence.

A boy raises his hand and says: "Yeah, but... can we leave five minutes early?"

And that's when you realise education isn't a film. There's no soundtrack, no close-up, no final applause. There's just you with your beautiful sentence, while they've already decided the only thing that matters is whether they get out early today. And you think: "I studied pedagogy for this."

Today, everyone wants to educate. Parents, teachers, experts, social networks, influencers—even algorithms. Algorithms educate tirelessly, without doubt, without ever wondering if they're doing harm. But an algorithm doesn't comfort, doesn't wait, doesn't stay. It doesn't take responsibility for a look.

Real education is made of wasted time, failed attempts, words said badly and then reconsidered. It's speaking even when they don't listen- not because you're sure they'll understand, but because you know that maybe, one day, they'll remember someone took them seriously.

In fragile contexts, this effort doubles, because you never start from zero. You start from stories you don't know, wounds you can't see, families under pressure and territories that make the news only when something goes wrong. And yet, it's precisely there that education stops being theory and becomes presence - being there even when it's uncomfortable, even when you don't have ready answers.

Educating is looking at a boy causing chaos and asking yourself what silence he's trying to cover. It's understanding that behind anger there's almost always fear, and behind arrogance a fragility that

doesn't know how to speak. It's accepting that not everyone starts from the same point—and that treating everyone the same often isn't justice, but convenience.

The truth is, educating challenges you. Because while you try to educate someone, you realise you're educating yourself too. You realise words weigh, that a look can save or crush, that a poorly timed joke can stick for years. And so you learn to measure- not out of fear, but out of respect.

Educating isn't winning, isn't fixing someone, isn't building perfect people. Educating is accompanying, walking alongside - sometimes slowing down, sometimes stopping, sometimes going back. It's having the courage to stay in complexity without running away.

And while you do all this, you understand something fundamental: what we call margins aren't distant places- they're places we haven't looked at closely enough. Social, emotional, geographical margins. Places where answers always arrive late, but where questions always come first.

Perhaps educating isn't filling, but making space. Space to make mistakes, to change your mind, to become something we can't yet imagine. And so yes, educating is easy... if you don't have to do it yourself. But if you choose to really do it, you discover it's neither a job nor a formula- it's a shared responsibility.

And perhaps, in the end, educating means exactly this: learning to look more closely.