A progressive who seek the ancient era

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To know good is to do good. - Socrates

Here are 2 people. One insists our education make advance. The other insists our education focus old values. Are they have different opinions? Yes, of course. Then if the former claims, “Children have the human rights, so we do not order them but convince them.” does it make sense? Sure. And we can call the former ‘a progressive’ in education. And if the latter claims “Socrates is right. So when we teach, we should know the theory of Socrates even he was the ancient Greek.” does it make sense? Naturally. And we can call the latter ‘a conservative’ in education. There is one thought, ‘If we can convince the students of the reason why we observe the rules, the students can observe the rules out of her own will. In that case, we do not have to punish the students.’ Can the thought link the opinion of the former? I am sure. And is the thought related to the theory of Socrates, *to know is to do*? I think so. So are the former and the latter have different opinions indeed? It was my first question when I learned the education. Although I do not know the right answer about the question, I see the opinion is correct. I like the opinion, ‘children can cogitate same as adults.’ But it does not mean I have get the treatment when I was a student. There are 2 stories of mine.

When I was a high school student, I was late 5 minutes in first class which was English class. English teacher was angry with me. Actually, I had said my homeroom teacher “As I attend an institute, I could late.” But she was too strict to understand my situation. Of course she had the right to judge if a student attends, but the judge was not accordance with the rules. In school rule, I was ‘late’ when I came class until after 15 minutes. I did not know why she was so angry exactly, but she might have hated the institute, the private education. It was the only record that I was absent. However, it does not mean the judge was effective. After the case, the teacher of the institute finished the class 5 minutes early accidentally. That was all. If the same case had happened, I would have been absent again. Since I met the English teacher, I have disliked strict punishment based policy.

As time goes by, I became university student. I joined the class “The elementary course of English.” The class – in fact, the professor – required ‘using English only.’ She is good at English, and all the students adjusted her course. Except me. I do not want to remind the time. I was very lethargy, had a sense of inferiority. I did not understand not only the learning but also her joke in class, and even I was not able to say “I do not understand what you say.” I just drew a blank in the class. In the end of the class, I felt nothing but a sense of freedom. The policy did not make me speak English.

In my case, compulsion did not have an influence on me. Then, do you have any alternative solution? So, return to the top of the essay. “To know good is to do good – Socrates.”

Students should know why the rules are. After knowing the reason, students can break the rules only when their own reason is more important than the rule. And in that case, punishments and rewards also do not prevent the breaking of students. Although there are some differences between adults and children, both of them could obey the right rule. In my case, if I knew the reason why I suffer, I was able to obey easily.

In conclusion, though we tend to find the solution outsides – rewards and punishments - when we face the problem, it cannot always work. Of course some insist children are barely affected on inner motive. And it is not wrong. However, it should not mean a policy has to link outer motive. Students – even they are children – can tell ‘must’ and ‘should’. In Socratic view, the teacher should teach not the result, but the reason. Nonetheless I do not know whether the view is progressive or conservative, I believe that is what to do.