



Poverty 1, definitions of Poverty

Intermediate (Classes 7-10)



Definitions of Poverty and Prosperity (A Pestalozzi Approach)

Instructions to students:

The students brainstorm definitions of **'poverty'** and these are written on the board.

The teacher divides the students into groups of three and gives each group a set of the cards found on the 'Definitions of Poverty' sheet.

- Look at the cards and decide which of the things are basic needs; the things you could not do without and without which you would consider yourself to be very poor. Put these into one pile
- Look at the remaining cards and decide which you could, or do, easily do without. If you do not have these things you do not think of yourself as poor
- Which cards are remaining? Without these things you may consider yourself to be poor but not very poor
- Are there any definitions of poverty on the blackboard, or definitions you can now think of, that are not included in the cards? If so, make a card for each one and put each into the appropriate pile

The students discuss their results and the idea that there are different levels of poverty. The teacher connects these to Pestalozzi's ideas about poverty (see definitions of poverty below).

Materials Needed

For each group of three students:

- A copy of the 'Definitions of Poverty' sheet (cut up)
- A sheet of blank card, a pen and scissors



Poverty 1, definitions of Poverty - Continued

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Definitions of Poverty and Prosperity (A Pestalozzi Approach)

Instructions to students:

1) Absolute poverty: If people live in absolute poverty they do not have enough income to satisfy the most basic of human needs – food, clothing, shelter – in order to ensure survival. Students look at their first pile of cards and ensure that not having what is written on the cards match this definition

2) Relative poverty: If people live in relative poverty they may have less than their friends or than many people in their country or in the world, but not having these things does not endanger their lives – they can still survive. Students look at their last pile of cards and ensure that not having what is written on the cards match this definition.

The students discuss 'poverty', including the following points:

- Poverty is not simply a lack of money or of material goods – it may be a lack of friends or a lack of spiritual help. Everybody's idea of absolute poverty is likely to be the same but our idea of relative poverty varies according to how the people around us live. We may not feel poor until we compare ourselves to someone richer than us.
- Might there be any advantages to relative poverty? (For example, for the future of our planet, people share more, are less selfish, and are not scared of losing their wealth...). Pestalozzi believed that relative poverty is a good thing (see below)

The students move outdoors or to an empty space. The teacher gives a definition of poverty, 'Poverty is not having ...' and the students move to stand in a position according to their opinion, those who 'most agree' that this defines absolute poverty stand to the far left, those who 'least agree' stand to the far right, those who 'agree to some extent' stand halfway to the left, etcetera. The teacher asks different students to explain the positions they have chosen.

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Pestalozzi called absolute poverty 'misery'. He spent his life trying to help people out of this kind of poverty. For example, Switzerland abolished a tax called the tithe because of Pestalozzi's arguments against it. The tithe meant that the already poor farmers had to pay unfairly high amounts as tax.

Pestalozzi called relative poverty 'modest circumstances'. Pestalozzi himself lived in relative poverty and he believed that poor conditions or modest circumstances were very positive. This is because he believed that life lived in modest circumstances forces people to use their own strengths and so to develop them. According to Pestalozzi, the family life of poor people is more likely to have opportunities for mutual helpfulness, self-sacrifice and loving sympathy, and therefore for the development of morality; there may be fewer such opportunities in the family life of the rich. If a person does not have financial means he or she need only be poor externally, that is lacking material things. Helped by a suitable education, a person's strengths can be developed, making that person internally rich.

To Pestalozzi it is this internal prosperity that matters. He believed that external poverty (but not destitution, extreme poverty or what is termed in this Teaching Idea 'absolute' poverty) is generally a better condition than external prosperity for the development of internal prosperity. This is why Pestalozzi's education of the poor is not designed to take people out of poverty into wealth, but instead gives training for a life of poverty. (Refer to 'Pestalozzi's Understanding of Poverty' (pp.33-34) in 'Poverty' in 'Section 4: Pestalozzi and Education' of the 'Pestalozzi Information Pack'.)



Poverty 1, definitions of Poverty - Resource

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Definitions of Poverty Based on an idea from Fountain, s. (1995) Not having...

washing facilities and a toilet in your house	your own possessions like books, music and pictures	a room of your own
access to medicines, a doctor and a hospital	a telephone in your home	access to public transport
efficient rubbish collection from your home	access to primary education	enough money to mean that the children do no paid work
shelter which keeps bad weather out	access to a computer and connection to the Internet	clean drinking water in your own home
your friends and family with you	smart clothes for special occasions	access to a holy person you can go to for spiritual advice
a source of clean drinking water near to your home	electricity in your home	the things or opportunities that your friends have
the freedom to go to university, having to earn money instead	enough clothes to keep warm	a car for every family