

The cocoon and the butterfly

I have often used this short extract with groups of teachers and trainers as a starting point for discussion about the responsibilities of a facilitative teacher. It is open to interpretation by participants, but the most common message it seems to carry is an understanding that learning takes place at a speed decided by the learner and not by the teacher – it can be conceived of as a kind of 'organic process'. This message seems to apply equally to the speed of change or development in teachers.

(Rod)

'I remember one morning when I discovered a cocoon in the bark of a tree just as the butterfly was making a hole in its case and preparing to come out. I waited awhile but it was too long appearing and I was impatient. I bent over it and breathed on it to warm it. I warmed it as quickly as I could and the miracle began to happen before my eyes, faster than life. The case opened, the butterfly started slowly crawling out, and I shall never forget my horror when I saw how its wings were folded back and crumpled; the wretched butterfly tried with its whole trembling body to unfold them. Bending over it, I tried to help it with my breath. In vain.

It needed to be hatched out patiently and the unfolding of the wings needed to be a gradual process in the sun. Now it was too late. My breath had forced the butterfly to appear, all crumpled, before its time. It struggled desperately and, a few seconds later, died in the palm of my hand.

The little body is, I do believe, the greatest weight I have on my conscience. For I realize today that it is a mortal sin to violate the great laws of nature. We should not hurry, we should not be impatient, but we should confidently obey the eternal rhythm.'

From: *Zorba the Greek* by N. Kazantzakis