



Dr. Luke Prodromou's support of the Disabled Access Friendly campaign

I would like add my support for Paul Shaw's campaign for a more 'Disable-Access Friendly' Greece and, more specifically, a more 'Disable-Access Friendly' ELT profession.

I have worked in ELT since 1973 and have come to feel, like Paul, that apart from the present perfect, we are teaching a future less imperfect to our students. I have seen the 'frontisteria' grow over the years from mere providers of language practice and, in particular, examination practice, to reputable educational institutions which offer their students more than just a bit of extra help with their English. I have travelled all over Greece and seen the wonderful work private language institutes do in the realm of education. The best schools have extended the work they do in language to raise pupils' awareness of the society in which they live and to try and make it a better place. This awareness of the world in which we live and the capacity to act to transform it is at the heart of education.

Another basic educational outcome of everything we do is our ability to put ourselves in other people's shoes, to understand others and to feel what others feel. No man or woman is an island. Your 'disability' disables me too. Freedom is a 'collective' noun.

Paul Shaw has a wonderful knack of making us aware that these principles are not mere words. He says we can and should act. We need to suit the word to the action. And he has given us a very specific area where we can make a difference. The challenge is not in some distant corner of the world - it is literally, on our doorstep, it is in our classrooms. It is in those places and activities which we rarely notice in our everyday routine: in the staff room, in the lift, at the whiteboard and in the smallest room of all. Reading about Paul's campaign shakes you into an awareness of all those little things you take for granted and which make your life easier. Actions below the surface of consciousness, which is how it should be. But for the disabled, they are a daily obstruction. Paul's campaign aims to remove some of these obstructions for the disabled so they too can enter and leave a building without it being such a chore that valuable members of society are discouraged and rendered inactive. We need the Paul Shaws and all they have to offer our learners in ELT or in whatever 'walk of life' (an ironic metaphor) they find themselves.

We need to raise our own consciousness about the human importance of this campaign and then that of our colleagues, our pupils and ultimately the decision-makers at all levels of society; and beyond consciousness, action: 'those little unremembered acts of kindness and of love'. What was that about a 'small step'...? For us, it may be 'small' but for the disabled it is huge.

I endorse wholeheartedly the opportunity Paul Shaw is giving us to make ourselves and Greek society a little bit more humane.

Friday, 29 January 2010