

The Conditions of Quality

Robert G. Hoglund and Ellis Lindsey

*Bob is the President of Bob Hoglund, Inc. and is a Senior Faculty Member of The William Glasser Institute.
Ellis is a fifth grade teacher in Mesa, AZ*

A further discussion of the conditions of quality may be helpful to educators in their endeavors to implement quality school ideas and principles. Glasser (1994) lists six conditions of quality in *The Quality School Teacher*. We believe that some minor revision to Glasser's wording maintains the concept and clarifies the intent.

Glasser's conditions will be listed numerically; the authors' revisions are in italics.

1. Quality occurs in a warm, supportive environment.

Continually focus and work on having a Positive, Supporting, Trusting classroom and school environment.

Quality work can best be achieved in a warm, supportive classroom/school environment. This point challenges individuals and schools to continually work at creating and maintaining the environment. The change in wording emphasizes the action and effort that is necessary to achieve this goal. This condition is one of the most difficult tasks to accomplish. To create the type of environment that is described requires individuals and groups to align perceptions and expectations. It also requires a commitment to working hard toward accomplishing this goal.

2. Quality Work is useful.

Everyone should be asked to do useful work.

This applies even beyond the work that students are asked to do in class. It applies to the expectations and requirements of district and school administration, certified and classified personnel.

Educators are continually challenged to determine what is and what is not worth learning. While some of the challenges are attempts to avoid work by students and/or faculties, many of the questions and their underlying premises are valid.

Some of the questions are:

- What is useful?
- How will it be useful?
- What is important?
- What do you (the teacher/administrator) see as useful? Why?

There are times when challenges from the learners are appropriate. Students/Educators/ Employees do not always know what prerequisite skills and knowledge must be gained in order to understand new material, nor do they know all of the subject matter that must be covered. In situations like these, they may say, "You are the expert - you guide us. The challenge to educators is in balancing the leading of learning and not dominating and making all of the decisions. This point emphasizes the importance of having the positive, supportive, trusting environment (Condition #1).

3. Everyone does their best.

Everyone is asked to give their best effort.

The concept of doing one's best is confusing at times. The problem arises because there are two distinct and different uses of the word "best". We propose that "best" does not always equate to quality.

The first usage comes from the control theory concept that we are doing the 'best' that we can at all times. [Best is sometimes translated to mean that if we are doing the best we can, it is a quality behavior.] Our behavior is our best attempt to get what we want at the time. An example of this usage is as follows: A student scores a 30% on a spelling test, yet that is his "best attempt" at that time; is it a quality score? (If that follows, the traditional connotation of quality, as many educators propose, we are always doing our best work.) Our 'best work' may not be quality.

"Best" as defined in the conditions of quality means more than first effort. It implies the evaluation and revision of work, depth of knowledge and the realization of its usefulness to the learner.

In order to effectively deal with the multiple connotations of the word "best" educators and learners must continue to work at aligning their perceptions of the definition of "Quality Work".

4. Constant Improvement.

Ask everyone to evaluate and improve their own work when it is important to do so.

This point includes helping each other realize that we are always making choices and that we are responsible for the choices that we make. This is of primary importance. One of the most valuable skills that anyone can have is the ability to evaluate their own work and effort and continue to improve whatever they are doing. While students are not the sole evaluators of all of their work, it is important to help them learn what quality work is, how they can best achieve it

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and how to evaluate their progress along the way. In education, this must be phased in at a pace that is comfortable for both teachers and learners.

Conditions five and six indicate the degree of quality work that we do. Five is "Quality Work feels good". Point Six states that "Quality is never destructive". In addition, these points assess how well the other four conditions have been met. Assessment of quality work may be as simple as the positive feelings that one experiences prior to, during or upon completing goals, tasks, work, etc.

References:

Glasser, William. (1990) *The Quality School: Managing Students Without Coercion*. New York: Harper Collins.

Glasser, William. (1992) *The Quality School: Teacher*. New York: Harper Collins.