

My Philosophy of Education

I believe the ultimate aim of education should not be focussed on making sure students can contribute as best as possible to society, at least not directly. I think education should be centered around creating possibility for students by teaching the knowledge of the world, and providing the tools to be successful in any of those areas that a student may choose or become interested in. By educating in this way I would not be preparing students for *the* future I would be preparing them for *their* future and by nurturing a variety of different futures the world would in turn become more diverse, more diversity means higher likelihood of evolution of different areas and creating something new. Therefore, in the end students will indirectly be supporting society by being the force that causes the change in our still very flawed modern society. I feel that my personal aim for education works for society's future and improvement, whereas the common aim works for present day society. I feel Philosophy is neglected in the classroom, but I have always been aware of its benefits in improving the classroom environment, student performance, and student support. It is something I hope to largely include when I become a full fledged educator.

With that preparation for a bright student future there comes the issue of learning literacy, specifically in the area of media and sources of information. Unfortunately, media and organizations have become increasingly manipulative and it has been even more crucial that students understand the importance of proper sources of information and how to identify them, mirroring the classic saying "don't believe everything you see on TV". This is important because students need to be able to differentiate substantiated or unsubstantiated arguments/information when learning something new. This belief mainly comes from my biochemistry history and how many scientific articles demonstrated extreme bias and left out key information to attempt to prove a point (which is also relevant to topics like antivaccination and the misinformation of the covid19 crisis in the present day). John Dewey elaborated on this fear more in

his thoughts about critical awareness of influences on decision making and how it relates to true freedom and the concept of free association (Curren, 2003, 103-109). In the classroom an example of this would be to take indigenous history from indigenous people themselves rather than from a colonist's written document. When relating this to current day I notice how some Americans seem to prefer to believe the words of a single police officer over the testimonies of a multitude families affected by the police officer's actions. Seeing these situations in my life and listening to friend's firsthand accounts really bolstered my positive opinion on what John Dewey believed, affected my thoughts on how to teach in the future, and highlighted the importance interpreting validity of sources and information. While the philosophy behind science is not for everyone I believe the concept of healthy skepticism should be followed by all because it decreases the chances of manipulation and/or misinformation from sources people think they can trust (such as parents or political leaders).

This idea of what the ultimate aim of education is comes with certain roles that needs to be filled for that aim to be more fruitful, primarily the role of the teacher. In order for a teacher to create the most possibility for the students they above all need to be objective and all-inclusive of the world's cultures, beliefs, and worldviews. All teachers should be one hundred percent objective, it is not the role of teachers to push any belief on any student. The other side of this topic is how neglecting to include information is a form of pushing beliefs so teachers also have the role of including all views and kinds of topics, no matter how controversial, because if they don't students could become ignorant and misunderstanding of those different topics. Topics could include areas like Sex education and different religious beliefs. This teacher role would promote the idea that it is okay to disagree with topics but that does not mean we should not try to understand and respect them.

The role of the student can be just as important as the teacher's because without cooperation the efforts of the teacher will obviously fall short. Skepticism is very important but there is a responsibility to also be open minded and willing to accept new ideas or else skepticism could turn into cynicism making it hard to believe anything. Tied into being willing to accept new ideas is an equally important role of the

student; being willing to accept and identify personal areas of weakness. With such a large set of diverse topics being introduced it will be almost guaranteed that students will disagree with some of the material and I think a role of the student is to be patient and understanding that everything doesn't have to make sense and it is okay to not agree with a topic as long as the student still remains respectful of others who may agree with that same topic (as previously mentioned). If students are respectful and open then their future can become increasingly more positive and lucrative.

If these two roles are performed at least somewhat well then success in a pluralist liberal democracy is almost inevitable. I believe the reason this democracy is not currently as good as it could be because of the mistrust of superiors and information and the lack of attempt to understand or agree with topics that don't readily make sense (such as culture or religious beliefs). These two roles promote the character traits of respect, healthy skepticism, and willingness to understanding, and the skills needed to act on those traits (such as proper critical self reflection and exercising patience). The education system cannot teach everything but can teach the knowledge required to develop the tools of understanding, so students can come to informed opinions themselves.

The relationship that thereby develops is one of trust for those who can support claims and information which results in a society of people who do not blindly accept information and will instead be able to fight back against manipulation and misinformation. People will usually fear (or hate) what they do not understand which can lead to racism and unacceptance to those who are different. This trusting and understanding relationship that forms is the foundation for a healthy pluralist liberal democracy.

When I was young my father took an attempt to teach me about sex education and I thought I learned a lot but later when I had my first school taught Sex Education class and was blown away by all of the things my father neglected (or perhaps just forgot) to mention as well as some information that was just incorrect. Albeit not as thorough as it could have been (only one day of education) I learned leaps and bounds more than what my dad had taught me, yet he never taught me more because he thought he did a fine job. This experience proved to be a huge support of my present day arguments against the idea of

parents opting out their children from education on important (yet controversial) topics such as religion and Sex Ed. As Paula McAvoy said in her essay “The Aims of Sex Education: Demoting Autonomy and Promoting Mutuality” some of the main goals of sex ed should be the simple supply of proper information so students can make informed decisions AND to teach students to make their own choices (McAvoy, 2013). What she said is very applicable to my philosophy in the classroom of keeping things unbiased so everyone can critically think objectively, understand the world from different perspectives, and form their own informed opinions. By objectively teaching Sex Ed in schools we would also be making those students better people because now that they have received more of the whole picture they will be more understanding of one another which reduces stigmas and bullying among other things. As we live in a pluralist liberal democracy this would be a very sought after character trait.

Personally, I have a very strong dislike for religion and most likely always will due to a large collection of rationalizations and proof of the horrors committed by religion. This in the past has led to me to completely disregard religious people’s opinions and look at them with hateful eyes. I eventually realized the discrimination and disrespect I was practicing, and the disregard for all the good that can and has come from religion. I can only imagine what I could have learned earlier if I had only given religion its time of day. This realization helped me understand that just because I saw something as bad did not mean it did not have a lot of good to teach me and that it is okay to disagree on important concepts as long as I also showed respect for those people. Now I am much clearer headed and patient when I do not understand or heavily disagree with something, which has led my life to be more positive and thoughtful. A positive life is obviously a better one and while we should condemn some actions or moments in history there are times where it is a very good idea to look at the positive side and learn from things we don’t necessarily agree with. An example of this could be the influence of the protestant reformation on education because of how Protestantism welcomed literacy into society because they wanted people to interpret the bible in their own way (Androne, 2014). Even though they introduced literacy for seemingly one sided selfish reasons they allowed everyday people to gain literacy skills and thus improved society.

Another way to word this concept is that if something is “wrong” or “bad” we can still learn on how to prevent those situations from happening again or improve the outcome.

I have learned in this program about the concept of multiple intelligences and how students can be very varied in their kinds of intelligences or can only show a natural ability for a few of those intelligences. I do not believe that teachers should deliberately seek to develop those areas of natural intelligence because I believe in providing tools for students to use in the realistic future. I believe it will be unlikely the reality of the world will specifically allow those students strengths to be used. Therefore, it would be more beneficial to teach students to be more adaptive and well versed in different kinds of intelligences while still remaining cognisant of their strengths in case they need to fall back to reliable skills or know what will result in the best product. I think this would avoid the likelihood of students being a “one trick pony”. More simply put I would keep my content and lesson style diverse so students can work on all of their intelligences and even discover a strength they did not know they had. To dive deeper into this topic if presented with a situation where a student was determined to become a certain profession I would inform that student once again of the reality of the world. I would stay positive and say people can do almost anything if they really put in the effort, but I would emphasize that there could be a massive amount of effort (depending on the student’s aptitude and profession they are seeking). I would never put down a students hopes or dreams, I would only inform them of the reality and allow the students to make their own choices. All we should do as teachers is help guide, educate, and prepare students, never tell them what they can and cannot do.

Under an ideal circumstance if my philosophy was put into practice my classroom would be a place where you would see students always questioning and contemplating what they are learning and taking learning rather controversial subjects with grace. Activities and assignments would show a greater degree of critical thinking in regard to constructive criticism, whether that be of others or personal reflection. Specifically, this reflective ability would begin at the beginning of the course as I would ask students to fill out a sheet such as a KWL chart in order for students and myself to assess areas of

weakness that could be improved upon over the term, or just a simple questionnaire asking students what they think their weakness are or something they wish they were better at. I would have these questions asked every so often to determine growth in the classroom and so I could adapt to the students as their skills improve (or decline). I think this strategy is also important because I think being able to take feedback, especially if negative, is a skill that has lost popularity in recent times, and that many students (including myself) do not focus near enough on how to improve and identify problems within themselves (instead of blaming difficulty on someone/something else). By normalizing constructive feedback and identification of areas of improvement I believe that students will become a lot more patient and understanding when dealing with others because they will better understand that others have their own personal difficulties and will become a lot less sensitive to things they do not necessarily wish to hear.

I wish there was more philosophy in my past education similar to what I have described above because I think I could have been much more understanding and objective when I was presented with topics and concepts from different cultures and worldviews. I believe by implementing my philosophy of education in the classroom I can better prepare students to contribute towards a much more caring, careful, and understanding society for the future.

References

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