

Introduction

A person's ability to teach can be influenced by a multitude of factors. One such factor is a teacher's philosophy of education. A teacher's philosophy of education dictates how they relate to their students and deliver content. The purpose of this essay is to explore my philosophy of education and the ways it may impact and influence me as a teacher. My views on education align closely with liberal, ecological and aboriginal philosophies of education. There are however tenets of other philosophies I agree with. Ultimately the ethos of my philosophy of education is a holistic myriad of ideas, borrowed from a variety of different educational philosophies, infused deeply with choice and empathy.

My Educational Philosophy

My philosophy of education consists largely of liberal, ecological and Indigenous Philosophies. I am an advocate for providing choice and knowledge to learners, and allowing them to make their own choice. I am however; in agreeance with Brighouse that autonomy is not "needed for a life to be worth living" (Brighouse, 2006). I would go so far as to claim, that the pursuit of autonomy and choice is the only way to flourish in life. With arguably an infinite number of variations of choice one can live in their life, the importance of being aware and aligning with one's thoughts can only be good for one's quality of life.

In addition to choice, I believe it is critically important for learners to understand the connection between themselves, the universe, their relationships, the world etc. This understanding and appreciation that everything is connected can come through religion, or spirituality or other ways. Kretz (2014) in his article Ecological Identity in Education: Subverting the Neoliberal Self discusses the importance of ecological selfhood. If one becomes void of ecological selfhood, the individualism and resulting neoliberal self can result in a great deal of selfishness that could quickly lead to the destruction of society and resources.

Recently indigenous philosophies have become ingrained in my beliefs regarding educational philosophies. The indigenous values in particular align well with my own beliefs. Ideals such as “self-reliance, - respect for personal freedom, - generosity, - respect for nature, and - wisdom” (Assembly of First Nations, 2010).

Educational Aims

The broad aims of education are determined by the curriculum that is being taught. In the BC curriculum system, these aims are determined by the government. As with many public education curricula, the main aim is to produce students capable of integrating successfully into society as productive citizens. The idea of what a productive citizen is may vary from person to person.

I agree with the importance of educational aims focusing on productive citizens who can work, raise families, buy stuff etc. I however believe there is more to life than the stereotypical life path school, job, family, house, retirement. The educational aims of education should focus on awakening the importance of self-exploration, wellness and our impacts on others and the environment as much as they do on practical skills. Without the seed of personal growth planted in students during their education years, I fear that many develop tunnel vision and become incapable of tearing themselves away from the routine of responsibility. The lack of focus on health leaves a person susceptible to being overwhelmed when life's big stressors show up and can result in declining health, much sooner than should be the case with everything we know about health.

Small changes to the curriculum emphasizing the importance of the aforementioned topics could have a profoundly positive impact on many lives. Additionally, I believe when people are pursuing personal growth, purpose and wellness, work productivity is increased. Citizens would then be entering society as productive citizens capable of even more than they are today.

In the pluralist liberal democracy of Canada, I feel that our education system lacks in a few areas for achieving a complete education. Education should develop an individual in a multitude of areas that will allow them to be the best versions of themselves continually striving to be better. Upon exiting an education system, a student should have practical knowledge in the form of facts and information about the society that can help land them a job. Subjects such as math, science, English teach these. A learner should also be equipped with an insatiable thirst for knowledge and continued learning, always remaining curious. Additionally, a learner should also have confidence in themselves and have the ability to look inwards and question their motives. A strong understanding of what it means to be healthy and live a high quality of life is also something that learners should leave the education system with.

Roles of Individuals in Education

In the lifespan of a student's education, there are three primary entities involved in the learning. The three entities are teachers, the student and the support. My own belief is that the teacher and student serve in an active role to facilitate learning, while the support generally has a passive role to play in the student's education.

A teacher's role has two responsibilities when it comes to teaching students. The first role is to pass on knowledge and information as determined by the curriculum. The second role is to unlock the potential and curiosity of the learner that enables them to thrive to the best of their ability.

I do not believe that enough teachers utilize the time and power that they possess over their learners to the best of their ability. A teacher's job description may simply be to impart knowledge from a curriculum to a student. A teacher's job is so much more. In passing on the information I believe it is also every teacher's job to assist each student in achieving their full

potential. The engaging of students in curiosity and development of a growth mindset starts young and needs to be nurtured into adulthood.

The role of the student in education is to remain curious and receptive to the teacher's direction. In younger grades not as much can be expected of the learner when it comes to asking questions and remaining open to a teacher's direction, the responsibility is more on the teacher to adapt to the learner's styles of learning. As learners become older and more self-aware, it's their responsibility to take a more active approach in their education. This involves the aforementioned importance of remaining curious and receptive to the teacher's expertise but also being open and understanding to new ideas and values that may not align with the learner's current world views. I believe it is the learner's responsibility to address and explore incongruences interfering with their education. As young as high school I believe it is the learner's responsibility to recognize and adapt to hurdles posing challenges to them. The teachers become a resource to be used in adapting to hurdles rather than the one to recognize the hurdles for the learner and adapt. It is worth noting that although it is not the teacher's responsibility, good teachers will instinctively recognize struggles in a student and seek them out to offer support.

The role of all the support resources in education such as parents, principal, friends etc. act as role models that passively influence the learner, providing support when needed as well as perspective and new experiences.

Practical Implications In the Classroom

In the classroom I expect my philosophy of education to focus a bit more on personal development and awareness in a hidden curriculum than in other classrooms. Age dependant, of course, I would like to do a good deal of group work and student-directed activities. Additionally, field trips, brain breaks, and a focus on the importance of acceptance will hopefully be the mainstays in my classroom. A big part of being able to help students help

themselves and build self-esteem is building the respect of the students. I have seen far too often a teacher trying to do too much without having the respect of the students. The first and most important rule of teaching, in my opinion, is to build rapport with the students. If students have the trust, they are much more likely to ask for help and listen to what the teacher has to say.

Coming from an athletic background the importance of fostering self-esteem and focusing on health is also something I would like to build into my everyday teaching routine. Beyond health units within a curriculum, teachers can introduce movement throughout the day to encourage the importance of being active.

Personal Educational Experiences

It's good to formulate and think about one's philosophy of education, but ultimately putting action to the thoughts and reflecting on experiences are just as important. My most memorable teaching moments come from experiences with my son and my own experiences as a student in various levels of post-secondary education.

From watching my three-year-old son learn I have gained an appreciation for the importance of not pushing education but rather appealingly presenting the information. I have found that when I try to frame information in a learning context there tends to be resistance and unwillingness to learn. When information is presented as part of an experience, there is no resistance and learning takes place more efficiently. An example of this is when my son says incorrect information, eg calling a dog a cat. When I would correct him by saying, "That's not a cat it's a dog" the error would be repeated. When I instead don't correct him and carry on as if he had said the right information he does not make the same mistake again. For example, responding with "what do you think that dog is thinking? Or what colour is the dog?". These moments were profound as educational moments for me. I have realized how

quickly people can get defensive and remove themselves from in-taking new information. Additionally, I have found a similar experience works well with adults as well.

Another impactful educational experience coming from interactions with my son has to do with the importance of freedom of exploration. When I take my son to the park I m often confronted with a variety of parenting styles over the children my son plays with. I have found that the children whose parents tend to micromanage them even when they are playing with other kids seem to lack confidence. This observation has led me to an understanding of the importance of giving freedom with boundaries. Giving a learner the ability to fail is an important lesson in learning their boundaries but also understanding that failure is an important learning tool.

Conclusion

My philosophy of education aligns well with indigenous, ecological and liberal philosophies of education. I have a strong opinion that to have a chance at flourishing in life a person must have choices and the ability to explore who they are and what they believe in. As part of this exploration, I believe it's important to recognize the connection everyone has to each other and everything. The two philosophies of liberal and ecological are then loosely combined in the indigenous philosophy of education, recognizing the importance of self-growth, but promoting acceptance of differences between people and appreciation for nature.

References

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