

Running Head: PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION

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Philosophy of Education

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Johnson, et al. (2005) describes philosophy as “a passion to understand the underlying meaning of everything” (p. 306). Johnson, et al. goes on to discuss how that, to many, philosophy is also a means of helping others who are also searching for meaning and that it is intrinsically meant to include all different types of voices and points of view. This idea of multiculturalism and diversity is at the heart of my Philosophy of Education. Not only did I become a teacher to help others better understand and live in our world, but to be a guide for them to find and use their own unique voice and their point of view. Johnson, et al. discusses many types of educational philosophies that I can relate my own to, such as pragmatism, where what works, works; progressivism, where learning is grounded in the learner’s questions; and constructivism, which emphasizes activity-based learning. My educational philosophy, however, does not fit neatly into any one of these ideas. My honest Philosophy of Education that I truly believe in revolves around two main pillars: teaching and learning via having fun and having respect.

First, my Philosophy of Education consists of teaching and learning via having fun. I do not mean fun as in letting my students run aimlessly around while not directly teaching them anything. No, I mean fun as in having the students constantly and consistently engaged, excited, enthusiastic, invested, and involved in our lessons. Nearly every time I have learned something valuable and every time I’ve recognized that someone has effectively learned something was when we enjoyed what we were doing while we were learning. Even when I’ve been presented with undeniably ‘interesting’ information, if I wasn’t enjoying learning it, I rarely retained it. And I see that with my students as well. I can usually tell almost immediately if my students are going to learn from my lesson by whether or not they are bored and unengaged.

Having consistent fun in the classroom while learning requires a structured classroom management system, which is why I believe in being more of a guide to my students as opposed to a specific figure of power and knowledge. Borich (2007) discusses the different kinds of power in the classroom in regards to classroom management and I believe that the most effective use of power is what Borich refers to as “referent power” (p. 160). Borich says referent power means that students accept their teacher as a leader when they like, respect, and can trust them. And what I’ve found is that the best way to earn this type of management power in the classroom is to not be an overbearing dictator that constantly disciplines and only uses direct instruction, but rather to find fun and creative ways of teaching while getting to know your students individually. It is in this way that a teacher can both utilize the idea of fun in their classrooms but still have a manageable classroom.

The idea of fun also means that the teacher must recognize their classroom’s diversity and multiculturalism. Johnson, et al. (2005) discusses how students often see their teachers as representing the dominant social group and, as such, are usually only interested in their point of view. I do not believe in this in my classroom. I know my own point of view and the idea of having my students regurgitate that back to me is one of most boring prospects I can think of. Even if I disagree with my students’ diverse points of view, I know that my students and I can and will both learn more and have more fun from voicing all of our points of view.

Next, my Philosophy of Education consists of respect. Much like the philosophical idea of fun that I believe in, respect is an idea that has various aspects that pertain to how I view education. By ‘respect’ I mean having respect for my students and

my students having respect for themselves, one another, our learning environment, and me. Unfortunately, I often see much disrespect in these areas in terms of young people in the classroom. This may be a more recent occurrence, or perhaps it was this way when I was young and just didn't notice it, but either way I believe that the regeneration of respect in students is crucial to their growth into adulthood and that it is a vital disposition for students to obtain.

One way that I believe that respect can be gained and taught in the classroom is by always valuing the classroom's diversity. Every student is unique and has an individual point of view. I understand that it is sometimes difficult to recognize this when trying to teach a class of more than 20 or 30 students at a time, but I believe that it is imperative to find ways to allow students to express themselves in some way or another. Without this, students may barely get to know one another and likewise between the student and the teacher. This makes it all that more difficult for students to understand and respect one another, and often for the teacher to truly respect their own students.

I believe that it is also important to understand and build respect in the areas of discipline and assessment. I think that adults/teachers often forget that students/young people may not quite be at a certain developmental stage (or that they may be disabled in some way that may not necessarily be visible) to completely decipher why their actions are considered 'bad' or 'wrong.' And when teachers present themselves as an unemotional disciplinarian rather than utilizing assertive behavior, as Marzano (2003) points out, students often lose, or never initially gain, respect for that teacher. Marzano discusses how the appropriate use of assertive behavior, especially when disciplining a student, can show respect while also making the misbehaved student aware that they are

out of line. In terms of assessment, no matter what our federal and local governments will have us believe, I believe that we simply cannot assess our students as if they are all the same and that they learn in the same way. To me, the idea of mass assessments can be quite disrespectful to our students and they most definitely respond to that in kind. I believe that when we teach only to test, our students feel that disrespect to their individuality and often do not exert their best abilities in the classroom and on their assessments. However, if we show them the respect of individualizing their work and assessments, they will respond positively to that respect. This is why I believe so firmly in individualized project-based learning, which Johnson, et al. (2005) discusses as learning that involves a process that leads to an achievable end. I find it much more rewarding to allow students to conduct their learning this way because it is much easier to individualize their work and the assessment is based on the process and the finished product, not answers on a test. And teaching this way conveys an undeniable respect for students' individuality, which helps the students build respect for themselves, for their peers, for their learning environment, and hopefully for the world around them.

The philosophical ideas of fun and respect often go hand in hand. If we as educators allow our students to learn by having fun, we are also showing them respect. I believe that this is true inside and outside of the classroom. As an educator, I will not just hold to these philosophies for my classes, but I will also teach others that without fun and respect, one is usually unwilling to participate in society in many regards. If we can teach our students this ideal from an early age, they can and will carry it with them as they eventually take our places as leaders of our world.

References

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