

My Philosophy of Education

Danielle Barnes

Professor Woo

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A philosophy of education is not only what one believes about education, it is a way of life for a teacher—it is a principle of how to teach. A personal philosophy of education comes from a combination of what they have experienced and what they have learned from the people with whom they interact. In order to understand my personal philosophy of education, you must know that the purpose of education in God’s plan and my role in that plan are the main elements of my philosophy.

What is the purpose of education? I think that we all agree that education is an essential part of society today, but naming one exact reason why it is important is a little more difficult because there are so many ways that education affects our society. One broad purpose is to assist students of the next generation to think for themselves, and to become all that God has planned for them to be. How can I as a teacher help students to achieve this huge calling? I think that question leads to another question which will help to answer the first one. This question is: What is the role that I play in the curriculum? A curriculum that helps students to grow must be child-centered and experiential. The teacher and the students all play a vital role in creating an atmosphere that is child-centered and experiential and that will lead to their success in becoming what God created them to be.

The focus of a child-centered curriculum is the growth of the whole student through subjects and activities in which they are interested. As the teacher of a child-centered curriculum, it is my job to treat the students as, what Professor Woo calls, “little onions.” I need to “unwrap” each child to find out their God-given gifts, and to encourage them to continue to grow and develop those gifts. I can do this through a curriculum that encourages the students to pursue what they are interested in. If the students are investigating their own questions and ideas, they will learn much more effectively than if I am teaching them things that they are not

interested in at all; I cannot expect topics that I find interesting to automatically be interesting to my students. I also need my students to help me define what they are interested in, and then to be engaged in learning. I have learned this through my experiences in high school and during my time at Trinity Christian College. The subjects that I was not very interested in were not the ones that were really intellectually involved. Art, on the other hand, was the subject that had most of my enthusiasm. I was interested in art, I had questions of my own about how it worked, and it was relevant to me. As a teacher, I need to make sure that I can “unwrap” the students to find their gifts in order to relate the subject to their particular talents. Having students do an art project about another subject, perhaps about the event that they are studying in history or something that is personally applicable, will help them to connect the art to other things that are going on in their immediate lives. I, in turn, need their cooperation in defining what their gifts are so that I can help them to succeed. A holistic curriculum is one that is not only focused on the students’ intellectual growth, it also takes into consideration the students’ social and physical growth. As a teacher, I must foster this idea of thinking by making sure that the students understand that using their brains is not the only part of school; recess, extracurricular activities, and just interacting with friends is also a vital part of their learning and achieving. The students then also need to realize that school is not entirely about the social and physical. It is also about the intellectual. I need them to respond to the intellectual side of school so that I can in return recognize their gifts in the other elements of school.

The second important element (an experiential curriculum) is one that encourages students to interact with the curriculum and to learn through experiences and hands-on activities. It is my job to make lessons which the students will be able to interact with (which is very important in art education). If I was to tell the students how to paint, and not ever let them try,

they would not really learn how to paint. If my professors simply taught me the meaning of a photograph rather than letting me experience the success and sometimes the failure of taking pictures, I would never have learned how to take a good picture. I need to let them experience and discover their gifts through trying. In order for them to succeed through experience though, the students need to be open to trying new things; even if trying means possibly failing once or twice before succeeding. Taking these steps into the unknown will be challenging, but that is good. Challenges are what help the students to learn and grow. I need to make sure that my students are not bored with what I am teaching or with the work that I am assigning. The students then have the additional responsibility to try, to be challenged, and to grow through their struggles rather than just giving up.

If I create a classroom that is child-centered and experiential and if I do all that I can to ensure my students' success in becoming what God intended, I will have been successful in assisting the students to achieve their best. As one of my fellow students, Rochelle Fopma said, "I am going to teach [the students] to think, not what to think. I am going to teach [the students] to become, not what to become." I think that sums up the most important part of education. It is not all about teaching the students facts, it is also about teaching them how to become all that God has created them to be; about preparing them for the life that God has in store for them. How amazing is it that I can be a part of that?