My Philosophy of Education

Progressivism

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Abstract

In the discussion of what my philosophy of education is, I first identified the purpose of education and how my beliefs of that purpose aligns with progressivism. I defined what progressivism was. I explained the use of a student-centered classroom. I described the appearance of a school and classroom of the progressive setting. I acknowledged the questions future administration would ask in an interview setting with my responses. I illustrated a lesson process in relation to progressivism. I created a management system for the classroom. I expressed my beliefs in the importance of incorporating progressivism in the classroom.

*Keywords: progressivism, student-centered*

To set forth a philosophy is the most important step in setting the foundation of a teaching career. A standard, a goal, or a set of guidelines to keep teachers accountable for their actions is important. What drives you as a teacher? What motivates you to be a good teacher? What does your future career look like? What do you see for the children’s future? To have a philosophy to believe in to guide my career is essential.

There is a purpose to education. What you believe the purpose is, can be argued. In my beliefs, the purpose of education is to lay out the foundation of a child’s future. Education is a factor that influences a child, from the time they receive the education, to the time they use what they learned in their role in society as adults. Education in part, is the largest aspect of what our future leaders will carry with them to lead our country. Education can make our world a better place by simply laying down the foundation to the best of our abilities as teachers. Our responsibility is heavy, for its effects will affect everything.

According to Sadker and Zittleman (2012), “Progressivism organizes schools around the concerns, curiosity, and real world experiences of students,” (p.190). This is why the philosophy I believe strongest in is progressivism. We need to give our students a sense of purpose, that what we are teaching them is essential in life. We also have the responsibility in organizing lesson plans that reflect real world issues. We need to demand critical thinking and problem solving to get our students involved, engaged, and excited about learning. We must positively impact every child in our teaching career, and make it our priority to keep every child on board with learning. The child needs to be involved and needs to be a part of their own future.

Content and skills that the public schools should teach should be largely differentiated to fit the needs of a variety of students. A Student-Centered Philosophy is what should play the largest role in the classroom. According to Sadker and Zittleman (2012), “Student-centered philosophies are less authoritarian, less concerned with the past and “training the mind” and more focused on individual needs, contemporary relevance, and preparing students for a changing future.” (p.188). Our community does not consist of only doctors, or only lawyers. We need to acknowledge the diversity in skill sets that allow our community to function in every area.

According to Westbrook, (1992), “There is an image of a school growing up in my mind all the time; a school where some actual and literal constructive activity shall be the Centre and source of the whole thing, and from which the work should be always growing out in two directions- one social bearings of that constructive industry, the other the contact with nature which supplies it with its materials,” (p.401) This was stated by John Dewey and I find his vision appealing. This is a vision of a school I would like to be a part of.

Buildings and hallways should resemble a variety of art that the children could relate to and reflect on when moving from class to class. In an empty classroom, there should be desks assembled in groups rather than rows to promote interaction in classwork. To find their own learning material, students should be able to access computers and articles or books from an area in the classroom at ease. There should be colorful posters of current material being covered in class to inspire learning at all times. Children should be granted easy access to materials that allow them to create projects that tap into their intellectual capabilities. When this classroom is filled with students, there should be avid interaction between them that is heard from the hallways. There should be critical thinking and problem solving at hand. Papers should rave of the welcoming environment and of the eagerness in the children’s desire to learn. Teachers and parents would have the capability to be involved in the children’s education plan and have the ability to guide them in their career choices. All aspects of the classroom, from the environment to the students to the teachers, would work together to create a learning atmosphere that works for everyone, with the administration playing a leader to all of their staff.

An administrator may pose questions such as; describe yourself and how your personality would reflect a compatible candidate for our school and classrooms. How do you plan to implement your philosophy into the standards of teaching for our school and how do you predict it will work in teaching our children? I would describe myself as outgoing, creative and open-minded yet disciplined and skilled in my preparation for this profession. My personality will be lively to keep the children’s attention, rather than dull and mundane. I would create a learning environment for the children, which would provide them comfort like home. I plan to use group work and create lesson plans that would play on their critical thinking and problem solving capabilities. I would allow them to indulge in their creativeness and let them contribute to ideas in class. These methods of teaching will work because they will be involved in making their own decisions in their educational career. They will unknowingly demonstrate more than a habit to memorize, but the knowledge of the material will be kept over a long term basis. To be on board in a school with a similar educational philosophy weighs high in importance in my job search.

The students need to be in control of what they learn. Progressive philosophy should illustrate students working together as part of a team. According to Breed (1933), “The theory magnifies the importance of the intellectual function and disparages the function of habit in the control of human behavior,” (p.112). We need to get our students involved in their learning rather than sitting in rows of desks staring into space at countless scribbles on a chalkboard as the teacher’s voice echoes off of cluttered walls of president posters that have no meaning to the students. We need to have our students actively involved. Ideally this could consist of group projects. Students need to be able to identify with the past and use it for future issues.

A lesson in its practice that could illustrate this would be group work. Students would separate into groups and be assigned a project over the current curriculum. For example, in a history class, the students could be studying presidents. The instructions for the project could include, an area for reading and researching the president of their choice, another for collecting and organizing information on the president chosen, and also an area for displaying information about the president. While they are putting together the project the teacher could move around the room motivating and suggesting ideas to add to their project and stimulating a learning environment for every individual. Finally to assess the project they could present the information. During the presentation the child’s learning will be extended to their classmates findings. This project would adhere to the needs of every individual. The child, who prefers a traditional learning style would enjoy reading and researching. A visual and artistic child, would enjoy creating a display of the information. Lastly, the child who is more audio would enjoy the presentation of the project. The project could also require how they can connect the past to the present to help them identify its importance. Student involvement is necessary to their learning. They need to feel like they are a part of something. According to Sadker and Zittleman (2012), “Progressivists build the curriculum around the experiences, interests, and abilities of students, and encourage students to work together cooperatively,” (p.191).

 There should be a management system present in the classroom to ensure a safe place and allow the children to learn all that is being taught. To manage the behavior of the students in the classroom, there needs to be a set of rules. The students should help decide the rules along with incentives and consequences to following or disobeying the rules. On the first day of class on the blackboard the teacher and students both can add rules to the list, as well as incentives to following them and consequences to disobeying them. The list of rules should be

posted for the class to see at all times as a reminder of what the rules are. Consequences could involve the whole class, such as lost time in recess. Incentive as a class could be no homework day, or movie day. As an individual I do believe there should be a sequence of actions taken place to require better behavior from the student. There should be first a warning to the student followed by a safe seat to reflect on their misbehavior. While in the safe seat, the student could fill out a worksheet that encourages them to think of what they did wrong and what they should have done instead. If the problem persists the child should be sent to a buddy room, another classroom, where the child could work on the assignment in a different environment. The final action of discipline should be the principal’s office, which should be avoided at all cost in hope that the child can resolve their misbehavior.

According to Sadker and Zittleman (2012), “Walk into a progressivist classroom, and you will not find a teacher standing at the front of the room talking to rows of seated students. Rather, you will likely see children working in small groups, moving about and talking freely,” (p.191). I believe in this philosophy because a classroom filled with students engaging in learning and excited about what they are doing is what will make for a better future. This educated approach will create a society filled with adults engaged and accomplished in their careers.

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