Veronica’s Philosophy of Education :

  Education is not confined to the classroom, it is not defined by a schedule or designated time slots in which we must listen, question and retain information. Rather, education is something that requires no specific age, location, gender, time, or race to experience. An instructor’s duty in the classroom is to guide the students to their instructional goals, based on the limit of the curriculum; many of the elements which comprise ones philosophy are based on their own experiences, interactions and educational journey. Having completed the undergraduate program in elementary education at McGill, and now the Education and Counselling Psychology Graduate program at the same institution, I have had the opportunity to learn about several historical and revolutionary figures which have, and continue to change the construct of the classroom. The following will discuss my educational philosophy derived from my personal experiences and research.

       The curriculum is evidently a high priority within the classroom, regardless the philosophy of the teacher; how you implement and instruct according to such theory is what makes for a successful teacher. As an instructor under the Quebec Education Plan, it will not only be the structure of my lessons, but will be used as the emphasis on acquiring the conceptual framework and inquiry skills associated with each discipline. In an inclusive atmosphere, the material will be developed in an efficient manner, so that learning - for every individual - is maximized. The lessons created will be completed so that they are differentiated according to not only ability but interests; all students will be held at high regard and expected to bestow their full attention to reach their definitive potential.

      My ultimate goal as an educator is to have my students be intrinsically motivated in a self-regulated manner. Much like the work of Aristotle, who believed that the mind is ‘comprised of knowing (cognition) feeling (emotion) and willing (motivation)’, I believe that the key to the success of any student is to have them be self-motivated, as this will undoubtedly put them in the position of achieving personal success, and developing methods to achieve such desired results (self-regulated learning). Self-regulated learning and motivation are directly correlated in my philosophy as they both instill meaning into the lessons and allow for the student to go beyond the exams and implemented goals, in order to create their own. In this manner, students will be intrinsically motivated. “Self-regulation (or self-regulated learning) refers to self-generated thoughts, feelings, and actions that are systematically designed to affect one’s learning of knowledge and skills (Zimmerman, 2000, 2001)”. Having students take charge of their learning requires ample materials and multi-sensory resources available in the classroom at all times, as they may explore their learning with the aim of creating a deeper knowledge on the subject matter. This gives meaning to the lessons as the students are able to understand why and how to complete the task as they are done in the classroom, similar to the flipped classroom approach. The flipped classroom is a classroom design of great interest to the construct of my future classroom; “with teacher-created videos and interactive lessons, instruction that used to occur in class is now accessed at home, in advance of class. Class becomes the place of work through problems, advance concepts, and engage in collaborative learning (Tucker, 2012)”. This allows for the problem solving, creativity and group work to be completed during class time and among peers – and for the simpler and less stimulating lecture aspect to be completed on personal time.

Although the curriculum is of highest priority, it is those teachable moments that separate the decent instructors from the truly extraordinary. While they may cut into valuable class time, if allowed, these are the moments in which I justly feel create life-long lessons and learning for any individual. Such moments may vary from day to day tasks such as hygiene – washing your hands after the going to the bathroom, to why certain people are or are born without wisdom teeth (natural selection). In discussing certain topics or questions which children may raise throughout the day, students will solve challenging scenarios, defend their points and listen to other points of view – which is more effective than any lecture may offer; often, someone simply challenging their point or offering new insight creates an intricate discussion which is more rich than the professor may have been able to provide. In creating scenarios and debates we are pushing the students to escape their comfort zone and understand more than what the textbook may be asking them. Due to the fact that “’the world has progressed from industries and manufacturing to entrepreneurship and service’, it is beneficial to train students and employees to be intuitive. Research has shown a correlation between business success and intuition. Faced with pressures from competition, acquisitions, and cutbacks, companies are returning to logic and sequential, bottom-line thinking. However, intuition must be used in conjunction with rational, logical analysis to realise the full power of intuition in making difficult economic decisions (Poon Teng Fatt, 2000)”. It is with this insight that I feel teachers must create specific cases and scenarios however allow the students to derive the conclusions and solutions, a tool they may then use in the future, regardless the career or path they choose.

       An influential aspect to my philosophy is work completed by Ames (1992), who developed the acronym TARGET (task, authority, recognition, grouping, evaluation and time). In this, Ames attempted to not only account for the educational factors, but also the logistic ones, which many instructors understand is a valuable aspect to their planning. While I believe there are other factors to be accounted for, included creativity and, as aforementioned self-regulated learning as the base of my lessons, the work completed by Ames is ever present and valuable on the technical level. In addition, the classroom climate plays a large role in my philosophy, as research has continuously demonstrated that students in a welcoming and safe environment continuously perform better in school, on tests, and are more self-efficient (Bandura, 2001). Schunk and Zimmerman (2007) stated that “students who receive encouraging feedback from teachers may feel more personally efficacious and work harder to succeed. Teachers can inspire students to write by creating a favorable classroom environment, such as by giving adequate time to write and revise (Schunk & Zimmerman (2007)”. While this may be but one example, such simplistic changes and considerations in the classroom may result in exponential results among the student’s attitudes, behaviours and outcomes.

      There are several constraints placed on any philosophy, as it is biased to one’s own experiences and considerations; what is important to note is that an effective philosophy adapts to both the times, and new experiences one may have in and around the classroom. As I grow as an educator and researcher myself, my values and philosophies revolutionize, as I discover which methods and techniques takes precedence over others. As educators, we understand that students from year to year differ, and what may have been effective one semester or decade, may eventually be ineffective the next. Technology and innovation is now a large part of my philosophy and planning, where is had previously not. Students need to connect with the world around them, and developing lessons which allow them to do so is vital in their enthusiasm and willingness to learn. With the switch from multiple choice tests to situational problems, blackboards to Smartboards and recess to allocated resource time, many new and long term teachers have to adapt quickly to the ever changing world, curriculum, and students.

      A further foundation of my philosophy is the work of Montessori, who thought of education as a discovery as opposed to repetition; she developed a “child centered approach based on scientific observations of children from birth to adulthood (Introduction to Montessori, 2014)”. Developed by, Dr. Maria Montessori, she allowed students to play, find, breakthrough and invent their lessons and meaning, with minimal guide of the teacher. The Montessori Method closely aligns with the discussion post in conjunction with my philosophy as it “is a view of the child as one who is naturally eager for knowledge and capable of initiating learning in a supportive, thoughtfully prepared learning environment. It is an approach that values the human spirit and the development of the whole child – physical, social, emotional, cognitive (Introduction to Montessori, 2014)”. In concurrence, the humanistic theory enlightened my philosophy as it was a concept which was new to me; as seen in the discussion board “the humanistic curriculum emphasizes affective, rather than the cognitive outcomes and one of the main goals is to produce ‘self-actualizing people’ (Maslow, Rogers, 2001)”. “Humanists also believe that it is necessary to study the person as a whole, especially as an individual grows and develops over the lifespan (Humanism Learning Theories)”.  This thinking has shown me that while the theory is an important factor in education it is the whole individual which takes precedence and should be accounted for. It is the planning outside of the classroom and not the micromanaging which will allow the students to excel in their environment.

       In giving students the motivation to succeed and methods to do so, you ensure their willingness to be successful and explore, ultimately providing them with lifelong self-encouragement. Finally it is the role of the educator to provide a safe, inclusive and adaptive learning environment available to all students. It is the educator’s duty to ensure equal access to education, a variety of methods to learn, express themselves and thrive. I believe that is it our experiences and enthusiasm which guide us to challenge and adapt our philosophy to discover the best possible outcomes, according to the differentiated situations. “Education has always been a key public-agenda item because the economy of any country requires changes in educational policies to match the changes in economic growth (Poon Teng Fatt, 2000)”. In having concrete philosophies and ideologies in which we design our classrooms by, teachers are able to remain true to their identity and remain focused on their paths beyond the curriculum to ensure the success of their pupils.

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