

Future-Focused Education

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I have no known conflict of interest to disclose.

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Abstract

Ultimately, the purpose of education is about preparing students for the future. In my classrooms, I am not preparing children for their future lives, but I am still preparing my students for the future. I prepare my classroom content based on information that the students need to be reminded of or refreshed on or based on information that is new or changed that they need to know. Many of my classes are required, but all of my classes are immediately applicable to the professional lives of the individuals who attend them. Some of my classes are also future-focused, such as the General Instructor School that I teach. Students will certainly use that in the future, and it even helps to prepare them for interviews for promotion. Thus, I prepare my students for the present and ultimately also the future with every class that I prepare.

Future-Focused Education

Education is about instruction. Although it may be turned into something more complicated, the simple fact is that the purpose of education is to teach content to students. What that content should be may be debated. Who is responsible for the teaching, whether parents or public schools, has been debated. Ultimately, the purpose of education is about preparing students for the future.

Philosophy of Education

My philosophy of education does not completely fit with or necessarily oppose any of the standard philosophies of education such as realism, pragmatism, existentialists, postmodernism, perennialism, or the others. For example, realism classifies objects into specific categories and focuses on teaching those categories; pragmatism teaches that reality is constantly changing, but we can use science to direct it; existentialists claim that we are responsible for defining ourselves; postmodernism claims that texts we read have more under the surface and should be dissected; and perennialism focuses school on the Western civilization as represented in classic texts (Ornstein et al., 2016). While each of these philosophies may have some truth to them, in my opinion, none of the standard philosophies stand alone. By basing education on any of the singular philosophies that are listed in the textbook, educators are setting themselves up for failure whether short term or long term. The only philosophy that truly stands alone is biblical, and the listed philosophies all fall short of that.

The Bible does talk about the importance of and education of children in both the old testament and the new testament. In Ephesians 6:4 (King James Version), scripture instructs fathers to “bring them [their children] up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.” Meanwhile, God tells us through Solomon that we ought to “Train up a child in the way he should go: and

when he is old, he will not depart from it” (Proverbs 22:6). These passages are the basis of my philosophy of education, which is that the point of education is to teach children everything that they ought to know about society, history, and the way that the world functions in order to prepare them to be profitable working adults and to help them to learn how they ought to behave within society. This would include the topics of science, history, social studies, languages, mathematics, and much more.

Professional Practice

Although there are many topics that need to be covered in education, it is also very important to ensure that the students truly learn the content. Since my classrooms are made up of adults instead of children, the dynamic of the classroom changes, even though both groups are often in the classroom begrudgingly. This changed dynamic in teaching adults, can be addressed using the theory of andragogy, which focuses on how adults’ needs in education are different than those of children (InstructionalDesign.org, 2020). The theory of andragogy points out that adults learn through experience and solving problems and often need to focus more on how things work rather than what things are (InstructionalDesign.org, 2020). In fact, having adults interact with the content more such as in case studies and simulations can even help them to learn better (InstructionalDesign.org, 2020).

But even still, different people learn in different ways, so it is important to be flexible when working with students and learn how each individual learns in order to adjust to help them each to learn in the best way possible. It would be an error that would affect students’ learning if a teacher were to use a “one-size-fits-all approach” (Multiple Intelligences: What Does the Research Say?, 2016). This could include some formative assessments and a lot of observation. By acknowledging where the students are at, teachers will be able to reach their students better

and help them to learn the material better. In my classrooms, I would include a lot of role-playing, scenarios, and formative assessments to help ensure that my adult students are engaged and learning and to regularly evaluate where they are at and know how to help guide them.

Educator-Learner Relationships

In an adult classroom, the roles of the learner and educator do not necessarily manifest in the same way that in a school classroom would. The teacher in an adult classroom should be doing less lecturing and more guiding and facilitating; meanwhile, the students should be taking on a more active and engaged roll in the classroom (InstructionalDesign.org, 2020). However, for this to work, the teacher has to recognize that they may not be the most knowledgeable in the classroom and plan the class time differently.

An adult classroom that has been set up with a traditional lecture-style instruction will often result in the students tuning out the instruction and certainly not learning as much as if they were engaged. “Strategies such as case studies, role playing, simulations, and self-evaluation are most useful,” but require the teacher to step back into the “role of facilitator or resource rather than lecturer or grader” (InstructionalDesign.org, 2020). This change in roles allows the adult students to take charge of their own learning, which creates more buy-in with each learner.

Diversity

Another important factor that affects learning is whether or not the teachers know who their audience is. For example, in my work environment, there are sworn police officers and professional staff that work side-by-side. However, if they are all taking the same training, the information and pictures that a sworn instructor might include when teaching sworn personnel would sometimes not be appropriate for the professional staff. Likewise, the men might be more accepting of some things than others. While the two issues of position and gender in the

classroom might be issues of concern regarding diversity in the classroom, the issue of diversity can become a lot more important when regarding other more sensitive issues such as ethnicity, race, religion, and others. It is always important for teachers to be aware of their audience and to always be mindful of the impact that what they say, do, or show might have on an individual.

It is important to remember that scripture tells us that we are to do everything we do to the best of our ability and to glorify God (I Corinthians 10:31, 14:40, Colossians 3:17, 23). Scripture also reminds us to love others (James 2:8). In order to follow these scripture passages, we ought to be constantly thinking about others and being considerate of how others might feel about what we do and say. This would result in less issues with diversity and more peace and unity instead.

Assessments

Assessments are incredibly helpful to the teacher whether teaching children or adults. Assessments can be categorized as formative or summative depending on when they are given and what their intent is. The formative assessment is incredibly helpful to the teacher as it helps to gauge where the students are at and whether or not the students actually learned the topic that was just covered. It then allows the teacher to alter their instruction in order to reach all the students and ensure they all understand the concept before moving on. The summative assessment, however, helps the teacher to know at the end of the class how well the students did and if there is an area that the students tended to do poorly on so the teacher can possibly change the approach on that section to help students to learn it better.

My Calling

When I reflect on my philosophy of education, it makes me consider how I ended up becoming a teacher. After I graduated college with my Bachelor of Science degree, I found that

people kept bringing me their papers to review before submitting them for their college programs, both undergraduate and undergraduate, and business documents. I thought that it was funny because I never felt that I was good at English, but one day I noticed that I would occasionally comment on word choice, tense, and sentence structure issues in conversations. After putting some thought and prayer into it, I decided to become an English teacher. However, as I was slowly working my way through my Bachelor of Arts degree in English, I began working in the training unit of the Arizona Department of Public Safety, which is where I currently work. I began teaching there and eventually became the person that first reviewed all of the lesson plans that were submitted and eventually became a subject matter expert in the state's General Instructor School program.

Now, it is my mission to provide the best training possible to the individuals that I teach in my department and across the state and to work to improve the way that training is conducted in order to improve the learning of all the individuals who attend classes at my department. This mission is driven by my philosophy of education being that students are to be prepared for their lives and finding out that when they get to adulthood and in the workplace, they often are not prepared. In addition, it is driven by the scriptures that God has given us, which are mentioned above, telling us to do all the best of our ability and to his glory and telling us to love others.

Conclusion

Education is simply to instruct, but the question of content lingers. While the purpose of education is to prepare students for the future, what that preparation looks like varies from one person's opinion to another's. But regardless exactly what content is to be taught, teachers ought to do their very best to prepare the students for the future, knowing that God has instructed us to teach children well and to do our best in everything we do.

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