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**Philosophy of Education**

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**Introduction**

Teaching is one of the most important professions anyone could ever have. Teachers have the opportunity to influence many lives over many years or several lives over just a few years. Teachers not only educate but also act as a parent, nurse, encourager, protector, helper, and much more. Teachers have the capabilities to inspire someone for greatness like becoming president or for servanthood like becoming a doctor. Society needs good leaders and teachers can build the next generation up to become successful citizens. I want to be one of these teachers. I want to influence students to make a difference in our world.

**The Nature of the Learner**

People are complex and no two individuals are alike. This is evident not only in society but in the classroom as well. Each individual has strengths as well as weaknesses. No one is perfect or will ever reach a limit to knowledge. I believe anyone can learn and progress. Some students will have an easier time learning than others but ultimately I think everyone can progress in one way or another. I can’t make someone learn, but I can give them the tools to learn. Being a teacher does not mean forcing information into someone’s brain. Instead, it is teaching so the student may learn for his or herself. As a teacher, I can encourage my students to learn and become interested in the subject matter and provide the building blocks for learning.

Children as well as adults are not without fault. Everyone makes mistakes from time to time and there are a variety of causes for this. People are not born evil, nor are they born perfect. Throughout the lifespan a person struggles between good and evil. This is evident in the classroom. Students face choices every day and it’s up to them to decide between making a good or bad choice. Teachers can influence students to make good decisions. Students are especially “moldable” at a young age and teachers need to help foster good decision making.

I also think individuals are born curious. Curiosity leads to learning. Teachers can use curiosity as a tool in the classroom to encourage learning. They need to take advantage of what the student is interested in and include it in classroom lessons. Students are more willing to learn if they are interested in the subject matter. This is why it is important to have an intriguing anticipatory set before starting a new lesson to grab the students’ attention. An anticipatory set is also known as the attention grabber, or the hook. It is a short introduction to the lesson that is interesting, exciting, or informative in a creative way. It serves as an introduction to the lesson about to be presented but in a way that can students intrigued about the subject matter.

**The Teaching/Learning Process**

Both the teacher and the student should constantly be learning. Teaching is a profession that can never be perfected. Teachers can always work harder, study more, and strengthen relationships. However, a teacher that has taught for 30 years has much more experience in the field than a first year teacher does but that doesn’t mean the mature teacher is allowed to settle for mediocrity. Teachers should also provide lessons that help make it possible for students learn. I believe the main goal of the school system is to educate. Therefore, students should be learning every day and encouraged to excel beyond the average.

Finding a student’s zone of proximal development is highly important in order to educate. A student’s zone of proximal development is the level where he/she learns best. The required assignments or lecture should not be too easy nor too difficult. If classroom lessons are too easy, it is highly likely that the student will get bored and lose interest. On the other extreme, if the information presented or required assignments are too difficult the student will most likely give up altogether. This is why the teacher needs to find each student’s level of proximal development and provide challenging opportunities within their skill level or ability (Vygotsky).

Education is a broad word and does not only imply the accumulation of knowledge. I believe the school system should educate the whole person. In order to do this, teachers need to form relationships with students. It’s not enough for teachers to teach to the mind through lectures and tests. They need to motivate students to lead moral lives in and outside the classroom. Decision making is a big thing that teachers should stress.

Teachers should also be aware that students progress through cognitive levels. This is important to consider because it affects what and how a teacher should teach. For example, a first grader should not be learning abstract math concepts. According to Piaget, children progress through four stages of cognitive development. Around age seven to age nine children are in stage 3 called the Concrete Level. At the beginning of this, stage children need physical manipulatives to learn concepts but nearing stage four students should be able to think more abstractly. Students will learn easier if they are taught in their appropriate cognitive level (Piaget).

Another highly important element that teachers need to consider, to help students be successful, is how individual students learn. There are many elements that make it possible for people to learn, and one is finding a student’s learning style. Howard Gardner developed the theory of multiple intelligences. He theorized that people learn best in one or a combination of nine cognitive abilities. Examples are Linguistic, Musical, and Logical. Researchers have grouped learning styles into three main categories. They are visual, auditory, and kinesthetic. Teachers need to provide many opportunities for students to learn using these styles. They should move away from the traditional form of lecture and have students participate in active learning which helps students that are visual or kinesthetic learners (Gardner).

The goal of the school and its administration is to educate students. Teachers should do all they can to find ways to help students learn. In this way, classrooms should be student centered instead of teacher centered. The purpose is not for the teacher to talk endlessly, but for the children to learn. Children are active learners and need opportunities to engage with what they are learning. Most children and adults don’t enjoy sitting in an uncomfortable desk all day, week after week. Teachers should be sensitive to this and plan lessons that are hands on or require movement of some kind. Sometimes it is necessary to have instruction through a lecture format but there are other times when it is better to teach using other methods.

**The Role of the Teacher**

It is essential that teachers be educated themselves before they attempt to teach others. Before getting a teaching job, people should have prior education. During the career, teachers should also engage in professional development. Teacher In Service Days are beneficial to strive to be a better school. Teachers and students need to be learning in the classroom and be lifelong learners.

However, even though the main responsibility of the teacher is to educate, it is not the only responsibility. According to Abraham Maslow there are levels that a student must reach in order for learning to occur. The most important level to meet is to meet the physiological needs by providing food and shelter. Some schools offer meals and snacks for students that wouldn’t ordinarily get it at home. The next level that needs to be bet is safety and security. The classroom should be a place of safety where students are free from abuse or neglect. Once the level of safety is met, students proceed to the level of belongingness and love. Students should feel like they belong in the classroom and feel like the teacher appreciates them. Teachers need to be aware of Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs and apply his theory in the classroom (Maslow).

Teachers should initiate conversation and genuine interest in their students. People of all ages want someone to appreciate them and love them. Of course teachers have boundaries that they must watch when interacting with their students but the point is to have a relationship. Students should see their teacher as someone who cares about them and not a dictatorial figure. I think it would be even better if teachers would interact with their pupil’s families. Getting to know someone’s family will give the teacher more of an insight into the student’s life.

**The Ethics of Teaching**

First of all teachers need to realize what they are getting themselves into before they enter the classroom. Teaching is a huge responsibility that should be looked upon with joy and excitement. To be an excellent teacher requires a lot of hard work and much time. It is a well known fact that teachers don’t receive a high salary but so that should be not a driving force behind the profession. Teachers should have a intrinsic desire to change and benefit the lives of their students. The effects of the teacher’s hard work may not be apparent quickly or at all, but hopefully it will in the child’s future.

Teachers should enter the classroom prepared to be unselfish. In other words, teachers need to be prepared to focus on the individual students and not his/herself. Each student in the classroom desires attention and may not get enough love anywhere else. Being a teacher means pushing on through the circumstances of perhaps being tired or dealing with personal issues and focusing on the students instead. All this said, teachers should have a strong work ethic and desire the best for their students.

Teachers are looked up to by their students. This authority position should be taken seriously. Teachers are role models for their students, not only in the classroom but outside the doors of the classroom as well. Students watch their teacher’s interactions with coworkers and authority figures. Therefore, teachers need to be aware that what they say and do may be repeated by their students. Students not only learn what is explicitly taught, but also implicitly by the actions and attitudes of their teachers. This means conflict between coworkers should be handled individually behind closed doors. Issues with the administration should be handled in the office and not discussed in front of children.

**Conclusion**

If I take up the teaching profession I will exhibit all the successful qualities of a teacher. I will work hard and encourage my students to do the same. I will participate in lifelong learning and will give my students the means to do that also. I will take a genuine interest in each of my students and give them opportunities to rise out of their circumstances and become great citizens. I will strive to do my very best in all areas of the teaching profession and work hard to give my students the opportunity to excel as well.

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