

Philosophy of Teaching and Learning

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EDI 442

Drs. Shema and Troman

December 8, 2021

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As both a student and a future teacher, my personal philosophy of teaching and learning is constantly changing and evolving. The experiences that I go through and the learning that I encounter all contribute to the way that I view myself as a teacher and the goals that I set for my future. Despite this being in a constant state of change and development, my personal definitions of what teaching and learning are, remain the same – that learning is the obtaining and retaining of knowledge, and that teaching is imparting this knowledge unto others. I believe that both are multifaceted and encompass many different things. To properly teach students, it is our responsibility as teachers to obtain knowledge about them to create an inclusive environment. This not only encourages all to learn but also emphasizes individuality; the classroom would not be *the classroom* without each student, creating a sense of community and care.

Prior knowledge, interests, and experiences are of the utmost importance for a teacher to understand about each of their students to facilitate their learning properly.

“They made individual personal contact with them regularly as they arrived at school and during the day, learning what in their lives mattered and what could become relevant for them. Indeed, this personal contact made it easier for them to arrive at common understandings of learning situations—what is called intersubjectivity—making joint participation in intellectual problem-solving possible.” (Johnston, 2004).

We can see that this quote addresses the idea of understanding your students on a personal and individual level, and how we can utilize this to our advantage. The first way that I would begin to do this is by making a phone call to the homes of each of my students’ families in the beginning of the year. This is a wonderfully beneficial way to show parents that you are

PHILOSOPHY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

engaged and are genuinely interested in their child. Having a brief conversation with them and asking them about concerns and things that could be relevant about their child can go a long way in not only forming the understanding of the teacher, but a relationship between the family members/guardians of your students, and yourself as well. This brings me to my next point regarding the learning of your students' prior knowledge and experiences – differentiation. Differentiation along with Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and its implementation within the classroom is vital to planning and addressing the different levels and experiences of your students.

“In a UDL environment, students rarely do the same task in the same way at the same time. The flexible options will differ across developmental ages. But the framework for having clear goals and flexible options is consistent no matter the grade level or content areas.” (Posey, 2021).

This quote specifically addresses one of the beneficial parts of UDL and why I believe it to be so important. As a future teacher, I would be sure to offer my students multiple options at different levels of learning, such as providing them with various books at different reading levels, forming reading, writing, or math groups based on their ability and constantly changing said groups as the students grow, so they feel properly challenged academically, while, at the same time, building other positive attributes like autonomy and agency. My final example of how I will form an understanding of my students and their prior knowledge and experiences would be through implementation of diversity with regards not only to my students specifically, but also within the planning of my lessons. I find it so important to plan to include as much diversity within a classroom as possible, encouraging students to connect to the lessons and to identify with the content we are learning. This is best represented through Culturally Responsive

PHILOSOPHY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching (CRT) and can be implemented within the classroom in many ways, such as diversifying your literary selection and much more.

This leads me to my final point – building an equitable classroom environment around inclusivity and diversity. This is not only another way that we as educators can engage with our students' prior knowledge but is foundational to my personal philosophy of teaching and learning. As mentioned previously, CRT is a way in which we can learn, teach, and celebrate our students, and continuously integrate this throughout our classroom. Implementing this into our classroom is a way that we can build equity and inclusion into a diverse learning environment. One specific example of how I personally would plan on building equity and inclusion is by increasing representation within my classroom, learning, and teaching about cultures and differences that make all students special and valued within the school. This can be done in various ways such as providing students opportunity to share about their experiences and/or backgrounds.

Overall, I define learning as obtaining and retaining knowledge through meaningful experiences, while teaching is facilitating and providing this knowledge. Both teaching and learning are mechanisms that are multifaceted and encompass many different elements. I value differentiation, understanding and building knowledge about my students' backgrounds and prior experiences, which contribute to creating an inclusive and equitable classroom that values each student for the role they play in forming the community of our classroom and school.

References:

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