

**Signature Assignment: My Philosophy of Education**

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### **Introduction**

Every teacher teaches differently. Each has his or her own teaching philosophy that influences how they teach and what they teach. While there are many mainstream philosophies in education, rarely does a teacher fall entirely within just one. For instance, I myself have taken pieces of several to form my own, individualized teaching philosophy. This philosophy encompasses how I view teaching and learning, what I choose to teach, how I view my role and my students, and how I teach and manage my classroom. All of these pieces together, forming my teaching philosophy, determine how I teach in a way that engages all students.

### **Conceptualization of Teaching and Learning**

The way I see teaching and learning, and my whole philosophy of education in general, is most largely influenced by my Christian worldview and that overarching philosophy of life. Being a Christian, I believe God has given me the abilities and the desires that I have that make me a teacher. In a sense, my being a teacher is a calling. However, my calling and responsibilities as a daughter of God come before those of being a teacher. This means that I see my role as a teacher first and foremost as being a position to use to shine the light of Christ to my students. I believe that teaching is my opportunity to reveal to them God's character by modeling it for them. Under this overarching call, as a teacher I believe it is my responsibility to impart knowledge and understanding to my students. I am serving my students and their families as I teach, it is not them who serve me.

On the other side of education is learning. I believe that it is my students' responsibility to work hard, just as it is mine. I believe they should be required to respect the rules and to respect my authority. I believe that students who want to learn will learn much better and faster

than those who don't. I do not think education works particularly well unless both teacher and learner are fulfilling their responsibilities to bring to the classroom the attitudes, attention, articulation, and attributes that are necessary for rich and efficiently effective growth and learning.

### **Aspects of General Philosophies I have**

#### ***What I Teach***

When it comes to the content of what I teach, I believe I fall mostly within perennialism and essentialism. Perennialism focuses on the great works and the truth and knowledge that has stood the test of time and has been passed down through the generations (Perez, 2022, Chapter 5). Essentialism focuses education on the essential skills and topics that students need, (Perez, 2022, Chapter 8). I see so much value in learning from the past and in teaching absolute truths as well as principles and practices that have stood the test of time. I think that the content within the curriculum is overly complicated these days and that a simpler set of content goals would allow for a better retention rate and less jumbled understanding within students' minds. That is why I identify most with these philosophies of essentialism and perennialism when it comes to what I teach. Other philosophies like reconstructionism that uses education for social advocacy or constructivism that allows students to discover their own truth do not align with my Christian philosophy and so do not play a part in my educational philosophy.

#### ***How I Teach***

When it comes to how I teach, I can see aspects of several different philosophies within my own. Aspects of Essentialism and Perennialism are still seen in this area, but perhaps more worth noting are how Progressivism and Behaviorism take shape not in what I teach, but only in how I teach. For example, inquiry based learning and teaching to the whole student are both

main parts of Progressivism, (Perez, 2022, Chapter 6). This in part aligns with my philosophy because as a Christian I see my students as whole people and not just brains that need filling. I also see the benefit to guiding questions and student inquiry. The difference, though, between me and some others who teach this way is that I use it to get my students to the absolute truth, not to their version of truth. I never want clarity to be sacrificed because something was student-driven, so I will opt for direct instruction and reiteration when I need to. Behaviorism is mostly to do with classroom management in that it keeps discipline external, using positive and negative reinforcement to encourage or discourage student behaviors, (Perez, 2022, Chapter 7). I think this is a fair and practical way to manage a classroom, though of course over time I would like my students to develop a morality that encourages them to be intrinsically motivated to do what is right and behave appropriately in and out of class.

### **My Goals for My Students**

Many teachers try their best to make material as interesting and fun as possible for the students. I certainly see the value of making education engaging, but I disagree with how it has so often become a battle to bait the students into learning as if they are spoiled children who need everything they are fed to be coated in sugar. In fact, I think it really is spoiling students and I think this does a disservice to them. I think it very inadequately prepares them for life. One goal, then, that I have for my students is that they would learn to be thankful, hardworking, and persevering.

It builds a lot of character to learn something or do something you don't like or don't want to do. Thus, while it can certainly help at times, students don't absolutely have to know why they are learning something or want to learn something in order to learn it. Getting kids to value education in general is the kind of engagement I want to focus on. If they have this, and a

true sense of gratitude for the learning they can do, then students will give enough effort and attention to get the work done and learn what they need to with an open and ready mind. If I can instill in them the value and habit of hardwork and perseverance by requiring it of them, modeling it for them, and encouraging them and praising them when I see it, then my students will be prepared to excel in the world and to do the right thing even when it isn't the easy thing.

Aside from this more overarching goal of wanting my students to be grateful, hardworking, and persevering, I also want them to be competent in the academic content and prepared for the workplace and world. This ties closely with my leaning towards the essentialism philosophy as I really do think that there are certain things students at certain ages really need to know before moving forward in their education. I want students to leave my class prepared to succeed in the following grade. I don't want to perpetuate the increasing numbers of students who are so far behind in academics.

### **My Strengths**

The Bible says that "to whom much was given, of him much will be required," (*English Standard Version Bible*, Luke 12:48). God has blessed and gifted me so tremendously and I am to be a good steward of those blessings. The strengths God has given me have been entrusted to me by Him. I should use those to benefit my students. I should give them the best education I can and should help train them to walk in righteousness and prepare them for life as well as guide them to healing from what they have experienced previously. My Clifton strengths are Context, Relator, Responsibility, Belief, and Connectedness. As a teacher with the strength of Belief, which I touched on above, I care very much about holding my students to ethical standards, (Liesveld & Miller, 2006). That matters more to me than their level of academic achievement. This means that as much as I care about my goal of helping my students achieve academically is

important to me, my goal of training them in integrity is even more important. Being a teacher with the strengths of Relator and Connectedness means I don't have superficial relationships and I have a more holistic view of students, seeing the connections among them, (Liesveld & Miller, 2006). In other words, these strengths help me build relationships with students that are rich and trusting and that lead to the connection needed for efficient and effective teaching and learning for teacher and students.

Aside from my Clifton Strengths, I have strengths in teaching math and in communication and writing. Math is in my blood as my dad is a high school math teacher as was my grandpa, who also wrote many math textbooks. His tried and true method of teaching math is what I have adopted as my own and I have benefited greatly from learning that way as well since I was homeschooled and able to use the books. It is a system that relies upon full, contextualized understanding and lots and lots of review over time. Furthermore, I was able to grow up being read to and reading myself a lot. Beyond that, in my homeschooling I used the grammar and writing textbooks my grandma and great aunt wrote that also follow the practice of deep understanding and continual review. Having this combination of strengths makes me a very valuable teacher as very few teachers are truly very good at math and those that are tend not to be able to teach it well or communicate clearly. These strengths have combined with my experiences and desires to lead me to believe that I would be able to teach an advanced math class or even writing class for middle school students or to spearhead an accelerated math program for an elementary school.

In short, my strengths, interests, dispositions, and experiences that have made me who I am, make me a unique and effective teacher and it will be wonderful to see how I am able to use that to positively impact my students someday.

**How I Will Respond to Diversity**

I have already addressed above the general ideas of what and how I will teach, but here is where I will discuss how this is influenced by and will influence how I respond to the diversity inevitably present in my classroom. McPherson reminds readers of the very Biblical concept that Satan is “the source of all darkness and division in this world,” and that it is his tempting and our sinful nature that lead us to the selfishness and self-focused attitude that most have in the face of every kind of diversity, (McPherson, 2020, pg. 46). Bearing this in mind, I will make the conscious effort to fight those attacks and to help my students do the same.

Having my previously mentioned strength of Connectedness means that I “instinctively notice the similarities that unite people,” can “see the hidden connections,” and am “a bridge builder for people of different cultures,” (Liesveld & Miller, 2006, pg. 94). I will use this strength to bring and highlight unity in my classroom. Beyond how I interact with students, another piece that can practically help with this is what and how I teach content. For example, I will teach material with the belief that all of my students can learn it. In addition, I will teach using differentiation to enable all students to learn.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, most, if not all of the general educational philosophies bring something to the field that I see as valuable. While I tend to lean more towards essentialism in several ways, I still use aspects of very different philosophies like progressivism. It is important that I recognize these aspects of my philosophy so that I can continue to grow in it and shape it according to where I am and what my students need. The journey of becoming a great teacher doesn't end when I get my first classroom. In fact, that is just the beginning of it.

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