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**EDUCATION 1010**

**PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION**

PURPOSE OF EDUCATION

 Education has been around for thousands of years, both in the form of individual study and discovery and in organized schools and classes. Humans seem to be naturally curious about the world around them, even if they all have certain aspects of that world that strike their fancy more so than others. The organized education system that exists around the globe today seems to have developed from this deep, almost instinctual, desire for learning.

 Not only have education systems been constructed to satisfy the human thirst for knowledge, but also to create better societies. When one casts their mind to the great civilizations of the world, past and present, organized education has always played a large role. The Greeks, Romans, Mayans, Chinese, and Arab nations all have evidence of past educational systems, and today many still hold that tradition (Mayans exempt of course, due to extinction). Educating the minds of the populace has a direct connection to successful and thriving communities and nations.

 Personal success is also largely influenced by education. One who is educated is able to function more effectively in life, not only in “book smarts”, but due to the social settings schools create, they also foster a climate to teach interpersonal skills, which might be said to have a greater effect on success that “book smarts”. Another benefit from schooling that drastically increases one’s chance for success is work ethic. As students progress in their education, the expectations for work ethic and responsibility increase proportionally, bringing with it lifelong skills to accomplish much.

IMPORTANCE OF CURRICULUM

 Curriculum, as it is defined in the textbook, is “everything that the teachers teach and students learn in schools.” The effectiveness of education is based heavily on what is taught, which then produces varying results from the varying curriculum. For example, trade schools will teach students hands-on skills in a specific trade or profession, such as mechanics or computer programming. Because the curriculum in each of those schools is so different, the results of what the students learn is likewise different. The curriculum will decide what knowledge and skills the students will have upon completion of the course.

 Bringing the subject into the realm of public education, the curriculum is more controlled. For example, Core Curriculum is decided by the administrative positions, giving the actual teachers a framework to work off of, as far as what to teach. Having the Core Curriculum in place to get teachers in the right direction, and leaving them room to teach in their own styles and manners gives students across the board a solid foundation of knowledge to take with them through life. The teachers should be able to choose subject matter that is current and relevant, that will give the students a variety of knowledge, and promote critical thinking, abstract thought, and reasoning skills. Curriculum should also include, not only facts and information, but also lessons geared toward teaching social skills (as I before mentioned in the Purpose of Education), which brings us to our next topic.

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

 Instructional strategies are the medium for delivering the curriculum to the students. If the strategies are ineffective or unsuccessful, learning is not fostered. Most of us will change our instructional strategies over time as we gain experience and new ideas and ways of thinking, as well as planning our strategies to fit our students as we change from class to class, grade to grade.

 One of the instructional strategies that I find effective and productive is direct instruction. I served a two-year mission for my church, and that combined with my experiences in life have led me to believe very strongly that there is a pattern of teaching that produces some of the best results: Listen, See, Feel & Do, Teach. That pattern is one that I adopted during my mission, and in hindsight I see that it has been very influential in my personal learning. The process increases gradually in the amount of involvement required by the student. Think of a father teaching his son to shave. After telling him how to use the razor, he demonstrates, and when the time is right, the son tries it himself. What will really help the son know what he is doing is to try to explain the process to someone else.

This same principle can be applied to the classroom. I intend (at this point in time) to form lessons around this pattern. Start with a lecture, explaining the material. Then show the material in some way, whether it be a demonstration or presentation. Then allow the students to do it or try it themselves. And the last step would be to give them an opportunity to teach it, perhaps by explaining it to their neighbor, or to the class. This final step in the pattern then crosses over into another strategy that I fully intend to use during my teaching career, cooperative learning.

Cooperative learning builds off of the social aspects of human nature, and uses them to foster learning. A large advantage to cooperative learning is the involvement of all of the students. In large classrooms it can be difficult for some of the less-confident students to participate. Cooperative learning gives them the chance, and can be effective in keeping all students on task. One of the types of cooperative learning that I would like to use would be the Jigsaw strategy. The process of each learning a portion of the subject and then teaching others fits in perfectly with my idea of direct instruction.

ASSESSMENTS

Teaching without assessing progress is like cooking without tasting the food. You’ll never know if the techniques you are using are producing the best results without some sort of assessment, a test to see where it stands, and what can be done to improve it. Assessments, not just at the end of the process, but throughout, are key in order to ensure effective strategies and techniques, not just in cooking, but also in teaching. Assessments are the tools needed to evaluate and adapt. Without them there would be no modifications in teaching methods, nor in curriculum, nor in anything else pertaining to the teaching of students. They are absolutely vital to a continuing, growing, thriving educational system.

More than just the stereotypical end of chapter test, teachers should be assessing and observing their students at all times. Even during lectures or instructions, small observations can be critical signs as to the progress of students. Small, informal assessments should be implemented often (noticing a reoccurring error from a certain student on the same topic), with the data gathered being used to create the larger, formal assessments (quizzes, tests, and exams).

SUMMARY

My desire to be a teacher has been a part of me since I can remember, but never prominent. I thought about being a chef, an engineer, an architect, a physicist, and more, but underneath it all, I’ve always loved teaching people, and have frequently sought opportunities to teach people, even at a young age. I’ve always gotten a certain joy that comes from helping someone understand something, from sharing knowledge about a topic with someone. The feeling of knowing that you just helped improve someone’s understanding or skill level in a particular subject is something that I love, and that is reward in and of itself. I understand that in a formal and organized setting the work involved and the scale at hand will be far greater than anything I’ve previously done, but I expect the reward to be equally great.