

Personal Philosophy of Education

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The development of a personal philosophy of education is an important milestone for aspiring teachers and anyone entering any type of instructional field. It is through this philosophy that we first begin to understand ourselves and learn how to construct an effective learning environment. My personal philosophy is one that acknowledges the importance of social interactions between students and teachers as well as the roles that each plays in ensuring a successful educational experience. Additionally, my philosophy contains attributes from the two separate philosophies of progressivism and behaviorism. Finally, my philosophy will be tested and likely affected by my upcoming work for the United States Army in the training of its soldiers.

In my opinion, one of the determining factors of a teacher's success lies within his overall personality and charisma. When a student feels comfortable around his teacher, a door is opened for effective communication and increases his ability to relate. Some of my favorite teachers possessed these qualities and gave me the opportunity to learn in an environment that was unlike any other.

For example, my high school chemistry teacher, Mr. Burkett, was by no means the easiest when it came to assignments and tests. Despite this, he was still one of the most popular teachers on campus. It was through his laid back sense of humor and openness with the students that earned him our trust and appreciation. Many teachers view this teaching style as an opportunity for students to become disruptive, but Mr. Burkett was able to keep us on task and maintain structure, and we respected him for it.

I feel that it is the teacher's ultimate responsibility to foster this type of learning environment. He should be able to create all necessary avenues to ensure that the students have the opportunity to learn to their full potential while under his instruction.

This includes mapping out the learning objectives in a way that everyone can benefit, providing multiple visual aids to increase understanding, and even being available to students who may require additional help.

In spite of all this, even the most prepared teacher in the most effective learning environment cannot guarantee that a student will learn. It is each student's individual responsibility to put forth the required energy and effort into the learning process. If a student chooses to skip class, disregard assignments, or demonstrate minimal participation, then only he is to blame for the outcome.

After completing the Philosophy of Adult Education Inventory (PAEI), I found that my personal philosophy is a mixture of progressivism and behaviorism (Kellermann, 2001). In general, progressive education incorporates such distinct features as learner-centeredness, the experimental method, and social activism. I feel that placing the focus on the students is necessary because in order to effectively teach them, I must first be able to relate to them. Once I've done this, I can then use examples that are more meaningful and practical to the students. Next, I feel that the experimental (or scientific) method is a great tool for developing problem solving skills. These skills will become increasingly invaluable to students as they begin to realize their importance in the many aspects of life. Finally, I believe that social activism is required to effectively teach certain subjects that deal heavily with social issues. When students begin to understand the importance of these issues in their education and everyday lives, they are better able to apply their newly obtained knowledge as well as become an active part in a continuous positive social reformation.

In addition to progressivism, my personal philosophy also encompasses traits from behaviorism. This philosophy is best summarized as one that focuses primarily on the changing of human behavior to ensure survival. Such survival can be simply accomplished through the acquisition of specific job skills that allow someone to maintain a job in today's society. Thinking back on my studies in computer science at the University of Texas at Tyler, I now realize that much of my instruction was done in a behaviorist manner. Because computer science is such a technical field, it requires lectures to be performed in a step by step manner. Additionally, while the assignments may sometimes appear to be redundant, they are in fact solidifying technical skills that will be expected of the learner upon entering the workforce. Because I've taken many of these aforementioned computer science courses, I feel that my teaching style will inevitably incorporate many of these behaviorist attributes.

When I finish my education at Texas A&M University – Texarkana, I will begin working for the Training and Doctrine Command of the United States Army. My primary career path will be in the field of training, so I expect much of my continued education to revolve around that of a behaviorist philosophy. When training soldiers or helping to develop training materials, my primary goal will be to elicit a change in the way the soldiers act and operate. This change may very well be one that saves one or more lives, so the behaviorist idea of ensuring survival is in fact taken literally in this situation. I feel that much of my instruction will be step by step and to the point, and it will most likely contain many visual aids for easier understanding. This will work well for me because I have a natural tendency to utilize visual aids when explaining things.

Overall, having studied and developed a personal philosophy of education has allowed me to better understand myself. Much of my beliefs have been shaped by past experiences and will undoubtedly continue to change as I apply what I've learned and continue to increase my education.

References

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