Philosophical Education Statement

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As a teacher in the early stages of personal development and growth, my philosophical education statement is based on my personal beliefs surrounding culture and society, and my novice experience in the field of education. My beliefs about teaching have been shaped by my experience as a student in various types of classrooms, my relationships with my own teachers and professors, and from my experience as a “teacher” in different situations. I have learned about several philosophies of education that my beliefs align with, and I have been able to reflect on the core of my epistemological and axiological beliefs. As I move closer to my goal of becoming a teacher, my conceptualization of learning and of teaching continues to transform as I concretize my pedagogical sense of being. By continuously engaging in reflective practice, I will be able to understand which aspects of my teaching, or philosophy of teaching, need nurturing and which aspects are flourishing. It is important to be aware of how one’s teaching practices interact with the world because these practices are truly a reflection of how one teaches who they are. After reflecting on my epistemological and axiological beliefs, I believe that the philosophies of progressivism and social reconstructionism align well with my idea of education.

Epistemology “is the branch of philosophy that addresses questions like ‘what is knowledge and how do we acquire it?’” (Edmunds, Nickel, and Badley, 2015, pp. 210), along with inquiries about what we do with that knowledge. In the realm of pedagogy, “if knowledge is viewed as what people believe and understand, then educators assist learners to engage in exercises that will help them clarify beliefs and construct understanding” (Edmunds et al. 2015, pp. 210). For me, knowledge in and out of the classroom consists of understanding different perspectives and worldviews, proficiently knowing how to interact in social relationships, knowing how to set and achieve goals, and understanding *why* the knowledge you know is important. I strongly believe that students should have knowledge about the people and the world around them and understand how everything relates to their education and themselves. Not only as a developing teacher, but as a human being, I believe that we acquire knowledge through holistic interactions with people and place. This can be through the exchange of information through story or learning how to do something new in a hands-on manner. I have a special connection with Place-Based learning and Outdoor Education which I believe are also core components of how students acquire knowledge in school. I was fortunate enough to have experienced both during my high school education and they have had an incredibly strong impact on me as a student because not only did I learn valuable real-world skills, but for the first time I started to develop my self-identity and values. This is something I would like to be able to provide for my students as well. I also believe that knowledge is acquired through a teacher providing multiple ways and options for students to complete a task or assignment so that they can use their strengths. Knowledge should be used to fuel curiosity and urge people to continue learning as well as to share information with other people. If people and students have a good relationship with knowledge, learning can be a lifelong activity. I also believe we should take the knowledge that we have and shape ourselves into kind, curious, and successful citizens. My goal as a teacher is to reflect this inside my classroom walls.

Axiology is defined as “the branch of philosophy concerned with aesthetics and ethics; it addresses the questions: What is beautiful and what it morally good and valuable?” (Edmunds et al. 2015, pp. 210). It essentially asks how we view the world and what our ethics, morals, and beliefs are - core components to who people are as social beings. For myself, I tend to see the world realistically but through a positive lens. It is important to acknowledge the struggle that is present in different societies and for different people around the world, but it is also important to not define the world in a negative way because of that. If you have the correct mindset, the world is a place of opportunity and beauty, and is full of amazing people and places. The ethics and morals important to me are accountability, equity and fairness, respect, kindness, and the idea that no one is less than because of race, religion, sexual identity, or ability. I want these ethics and morals to be a part of my classroom so that I can create a safe and kind environment for learners and teach them how values extend into the world around them. These ethics and morals are important to me because I believe they are attributes of a good citizen as well as a successful student and learner.

My pedagogical philosophy aligns mostly with progressivism and social reconstructionism although I can see myself drawing from aspects of other philosophies as well. Progressivism is “a child centered philosophy emphasizing problem solving while capitalizing on students’ curiosity and creative self-expression” (Edmunds et al. 2015, pp. 223). I truly believe in having the child at the center of the learning so that they can be fully engaged and can have autonomy in their education. Progressivism also aligns with the hands-on, active nature of Placed-Based learning that I previously mentioned in my discussion of knowledge. John Dewey, one of the founding fathers of progressivism, “argued that rather than the child being a passive recipient of knowledge … children were better served if they took an active part in the process of their own learning” (Wheeler, 2016, pp. 3). This statement resonates with how I believe students should be treated in the classroom. Student’s should have the chance to interact with the information that is being taught to them in order to concretize their understanding of the subject but as well as for their enjoyment. Learning should be a process that is positive and sparks a genuine curiosity in the student.

Another philosophy that my beliefs align with is social reconstructionism. Social reconstructionism is “a philosophy of education that maintains that teachers and schools ought to be change agents in creating a new and more equitable social order” (Edmunds et al. 2015, pp. 228). I find this philosophy tightly aligns with my axiological beliefs of treating everyone with equity regardless of their personal identity. It also aligns with my previously developed idea of using knowledge to transform students into kind, successful, and curious citizens who are able to have a positive impact on society and the world around them. George Counts was the first to coin the term social reconstructionism which he “based on the theory that society can be reconstructed through education” (Dalton, 2018, pp. 2). I believe that when young students are taught ways in which to better society such as the acknowledgement of subjects like climate change, mental health, and social justice, when they graduate, they will be making positive changes in the world because they have been given the necessary tools and knowledge in the classroom to do so. Social reconstructionism places education at the center of society and defines teachers as people who are capable of creating change. As someone who strives to make a difference not only within the classroom community of students but within the global community of the world, this educational philosophy is easy for me to incorporate into my teaching. I believe it is important that foundational ideas of society are taught within the classroom curriculum whether it be shifting society’s view in a positive way regarding LGBTQ people, people with disabilities, people from different backgrounds, and even women’s rights. A shift in society starts in the classroom.

Lastly, as a novice teacher still discover and developing my own personal educational philosophy, I need to remember to stay true to who I am as a person and become aware of the influence external sources have on my opinions and thoughts. This is important because when one attempts to teach without having a defined sense of self, it is easy to become disengaged from one’s work and students can easily pick up on a teacher’s lack on confidence. I have found that the environment around me, such as my peers and my professors and the classes that I am taking, has an extreme focus on teaching being much less disciplined and structured than in the past. I have also noticed that overall, there seems to be an expectation that teachers are anticipated to delegate classroom management and rules in a less structured way. While I do agree with this to extent, I need to remember that for me to be a successful educator I like to have certain amounts of structure, rules, and organization in my classroom. I think that because the theme of UNBC’s education program is extremely progressive and is highly linked to BC’s new curriculum, I sometimes tend to ignore some of my personal characteristics because I feel they do not align with this newer way of education. I need to acknowledge the parts of myself that follow aspects of perennialism and essentialism. I align with the idea that there is basic information that all students need to know, the idea of efficiency, and to an extent, the idea of discipline, that essentialism portrays. I also align my educational philosophy with the idea of the teacher being a role model for students and the idea of undeniable universal truths that perennialism portrays (Edmunds, 2015).

Overall, my educational philosophy pulls from aspects of many philosophies to create one that is essentially a mix between progressivism and social reconstructionism. After reflecting on who I am as a person and as an educator, I also realize that part of my educational philosophy includes small aspects of essentialism and perennialism. As an educator, my focus is on the relationships I make with my students in order to create a safe and welcoming classroom environment for them. I also highly value incorporating inclusivity and diversity into the social and academic structure of the classroom, so that all students are given a chance to succeed and enjoy their education. I aim to let students develop their own thoughts and opinions about the world around them, as well as help them to become successful citizens by providing them with the tools, knowledge, kindness, and individual attention that they need.

References:

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