

A Philosophy of Education

Education is evolutionary in nature. From caveman times forward man has always strived to learn more. Education and schools were invented to fill the void between what is commonly known and taught in the family setting, and the greater knowledge of a society. Bringing learners 'into the fold' of intelligence has become an important aspect of education.

The foundation for my philosophy of education is based in the existentialism of Sartre (1946). "Man first of all exists, encounters himself, surges up in the world – and defines himself afterwards" (Bluden, 2005), which in my opinion means that each person is an individual and must strive to find their essence. Howard Gardner's theories of multiple intelligences (Smith, 2008) support this approach. Learners have many different gifts, some may be talented musicians, others more athletic, still others will be more introverted, and some will have the traditional view of a smart child with the cognitive ability to succeed. Learners are striving to discern their gifts throughout their education. An educator's job is to notice the gifts or intelligences of their pupils and to use these talents to aid or facilitate their learning. For example if a student was discovered to be musically talented it could be appropriate to teach this child math fractions using the musical note system.

Through a greater understanding of the individual intelligences combined with educational evolution it is my view that education will continue to evolve and reconstruct itself. As these processes occur society benefits through the establishment of more experts in individual fields. I do feel that it is important for learners to have a foundational knowledge base in multiple subject areas, however acknowledging intelligence, likes and dislikes, allows the individual to grow and blossom in areas they truly care about.

A Philosophy of Leadership

When asked if he was right or left brained Paul Dennison, inventor of Brain Gym®, commented, “I am whole brain integrated” (P. Curlee, personal communication, June 7, 2008). As a Licensed Brain Gym® Instructor, leadership as it relates to the brain is a topic of importance to me.

Warren Bennis also spoke of the importance of being whole brained and its relationship to effective, purposeful leadership “In any corporation, managers serve as the left brain and the research and development staff serves as the right brain, but the CEO must combine both, must have both administrative and imaginative gifts. One of the reasons that so few corporate executives have successfully made the leap from capable manager to successful leader is that the corporate culture, along with society as a whole, recognizes and rewards left-brain accomplishments and tend to discount right-brain achievements” (Bennis, page 95, 2003).

Bennis (2006, page 97) reported on conversations he had with many successful leaders, among them Norman Lear. Lear’s belief in “following the inner voice” echoes the importance of the right-brain in leadership. Lear was supremely impacted by the writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson, in particular *Self Reliance* from which he derived the four principals of mastering the context (1) becoming self-expressive; (2) listening to the inner voice; (3) learning from the right mentors; and (4) giving oneself over to a guiding vision (Bennis, 2006, page 28). These right-brained principles, when combined with good left-brained managerial skills, combine to make the ultimate effective and purposeful leader

I too was greatly impacted by my first reading of Emerson’s text. As such I find it vital to be whole-brain integrated like Paul Dennison in my approach to leadership. While

management is essential, vision and creativity are imperative to the success of the leader; one without the other will not lead to true lasting success. Yukl (2006, page 59) discussed the theory behind this idea as the High-High Leader. This type of leader exhibits both task-oriented and people-oriented behaviors. I feel every area of leadership from product development to human resources can be positively influenced by this type of leadership. I strive to conduct myself in this way. While I run the day to day operations of my current business in a task-oriented way, when leading employees I try to put their needs and development first which is more people-oriented. It is sometimes difficult to watch an employee struggle to learn, but very rewarding when they finally understand. Long term effective and purposeful leadership is both High-High and whole-brain integrated.

A Vision for Learners

I believe strongly in the constructivist philosophy of learning, which means learners must construct their knowledge for it to be truly authentic and real. The teacher's role in this environment is one of facilitator; one that allows and aids in the learning process but does not lecture or give the answers. Certainly, looking at the technological knowledge of the average student, one can see a perfect example of constructivist learning; most students have discovered and learned today's technologies on their own. Perhaps there was a mentor or facilitator that assisted, but this knowledge is self constructed. In this age of technology allowing students to create their own knowledge becomes extraordinarily easy if we permit students the freedom to use the technology available in the construction process. Doing so has the added advantage of teaching students where they are; college students are digital natives (Prensky, 2001) being born into the age of technology and as such respond positively to instruction involving technology.

References

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