

School Experience Portfolio

Purpose of Education

To outline the intentions that education sets out to accomplish first and to evaluate its failures and successes, we need to define what we mean by education. In *Philosophy of Education*, Nel Noddings interprets John Dewey's theory that education should reflect the continuation of mental development by creating a context for understanding the meaning and aims of education. In the words of John Dewey, "an experience is educative only if it produces growth—if, that is, students leave the experience more capable or interested in engaging in new experience" (Dewey, 1904). This "growth" that Dewey is talking about refers to the corresponding relationship between education—the mode by which we perceive and conceptualize meaning and reason, and the constant development of mental activity; the stimulus that education evokes leads to understanding, which brings about more refined stimulus that causes a deepening of cognition. We must remember that each student's unique experiences deeply influence this growth.

I agree with Noddings' analysis of Dewey's work and believe that the purpose of education should be to provide students with the tools they need to grow, such as encouragement and interest in "engaging new experiences." In this context, education becomes a catalyst from which endless possibilities can arise. Attaching predetermined objectives to education limits these possibilities. Dewey says that the aim of education is for the experience to lead to more education. However, Dewey explains that schooling aims to provide students with enough competency to function and contribute to a capitalistic structure. By viewing educational growth through Dewey's "organic-evolutionary framework," Noddings emphasizes that similar to the purpose of life (from a biological perspective) to produce more life, so too is the purpose of education to create more educational opportunities. By viewing education in this context,

Noddings infers that "Education functions both ends and means" (Noddings, 1995). This perspective empowers students to take charge of their learning and be optimistic about education's endless opportunities.

Let us consider that the purpose of education does not always have the intent of constant growth. Unfortunately, this happens to be true in most cases, and there are underlying motives that limit the extent of education. The purpose of education is heavily influenced by cultural ideologies--such as the notion of individualism and a competitive social hierarchy, which influence the intention of educational pursuit and instead transmit specific values that yield to integrated members of that culture.

Following this idea, Paulo Freire examines the current state of educational procedures. In his book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, he highlights some oppressive practices within schools. By treating knowledge as something the teacher "bestows" onto the students, Freire draws attention to the power dynamic in the teacher-student contradiction. In this contradiction, a teacher's role is to "deposit" knowledge into the students, whose displayed acquisition of that knowledge is limited to "receiving, filling, and storing the deposits" (Freire, 1968). Emulating characteristics of oppression, this representation of education becomes what Freire calls a "banking model," in which knowledge is funneled from teacher to student. This model leaves little room for the students to expand and express their creativity, formulate critical inquiry, or exercise sovereignty over the available materials. This model also exemplifies the non-reciprocal transmission of knowledge, which does not encourage the teacher to absorb any knowledge from students. This approach diminishes any knowledge the student already possesses and projects innate ignorance onto them (Freire, 1968).

Stark inconsistencies become evident when comparing this educational structure to Dewey's aims. The banking model is not a failed attempt of a culture striving for limitless educational growth but a successful institution set on providing enough information to integrate individuals into the said culture as productive members, keeping them from realizing their fullest potential. The students' passive role that this model enforces has the goal of "indoctrinating them to adapt

to the world of oppression" by teaching students at a young age to distrust their instinct of inquiry and question their sense of autonomy (Freire, 1968). Freire's analysis suggests that schooling is another mode in which social hierarchies and dominant cultural values are reinforced and integrated into students. We can conclude that from the oppressor's point of view, the purpose of education is to prepare students for "indoctrination."

Role of the Teacher

Best explained in his work, *Teacher Education in America*, John Dewey outlines the ideal criteria and training for teachers. Dewey believed that quality educators were not only well acquainted with the "techniques of class instruction and management along with the knowledge of subject matter and principles of education" (Dewey, 1904) but also continued to develop and re-construct their own theoretical and practical methods of education based on the cognitive responses observed in their students.

Dewey suggests that one of the greatest threats to effective educational practices is teachers who lose their "intellectual vitality" by simply mimicking the mainstream script observed in other teachers. Quality teachers exhibit "intellectual independence" by critically reflecting on their educational development and practicing recognizing and *responding* to the cognitive reactions displayed in their students (Dewey, 1904). Successful teachers are attentive to their students' cues and treat education as a collaborative process. The most impactful learning I have had throughout my schooling career has been with teachers who are more concerned with students' cognitive development and are creative and unique with the different methods used to enhance students' growth. Learning and growth are not a one-size-fits-all process; therefore, teachers who approach education with conventional practices do not provide authenticity to their students.

The training that Dewey suggests for teachers-to-be is based heavily on experience, stating that a teacher-to-be should "build up and modify his teaching plans as he goes along from experience gained in contact with pupils" (Dewey, 1904). Often, this is not the case, and instead, teachers are discouraged to think critically about the successful and unsuccessful

aspects of their teaching or engage in the trial-and-error process needed for developing "intellectually independent" teachers. To ensure that teaching methods are genuine, reflecting empirically and fostering educational practices that thoughtfully address students' cognitive engagement is essential. Through these reflections, continuous modifications of teaching theories and practices are indications of their growth in critical inquiry. Mutuality with students can begin to emerge from teachers who, from recollections on their intellectual process, can create a likeness to their students, allowing them to "respect the mental integrity and force of children" (Dewey, 1904) and promoting teachers to develop alongside their students as partners working towards the same goal.

In his work, *Note to Educators: Hope Required When Growing Roses in Concrete*, Jeffrey M. R. Duncan-Andrade highlights some essential roles in ineffective teacher practices. He underscores that teachers can offer one of the most significant sources of hope simply through their authentic alliance of solidarity with their students. Duncan-Andrade believes that the role of the teacher is to provide love and care to their students through solidarity, thoughtfulness, and respect. Duncan-Andrade also cautions against three types of false hope: Hokey Hope, Mythical Hope, and Hope Deferred, which teachers can demonstrate and promulgate in, especially urban schools if they don't show communal commitment to working with their students to transform the world.

Hokey Hope is rooted in privilege and exhibited through misunderstandings based on naïve optimism that promotes the misguided notion that an individualistic work effort will lead to "the American dream." Duncan-Andrade says that this form of "false hope" harms students because it has the potential of delegitimizing and ignoring the "inequities that impact the lives of urban youth" (Duncan-Andrade, 2009). Mythical Hope uses similar successful outlier cases to justify the injustices that produce an uneven playfield instead of identifying these cases as exceptions to the norm. Referencing President Obama's election as evidence, Duncan-Andrade says that the Mythical Hope promoted in schools created a fictional narrative that suggests that things are better than they are, overlooking the social implications of the election of our first Black

President. Hope Deferred is another form of false hope. This hope is embodied when teachers cannot relate to their students and show an "unwillingness to confront these harsh realities of social inequality with our pedagogy" (Duncan-Andrade, 2009). Current research done by Professor Emeritus S. Leonard Syme in the correlation of public health studies that view disease concerning social status suggests that the constant socio-economic stressors of urban youth inhibit their academic achievement (Duncan-Andrade, 2009).

Material Hope, Socratic Hope, and Audacious Hope are the three forms of critical hope that have just as big of potential to influence urban students as false hope. An example of Material Hope is providing students with "material resources" such as—providing laptops, housing, food, supplies, car rides, and links to legal and medical services, that are made available to students by a teacher who recognizes the impacts and disadvantages that socio-economic stressors have on the lives of urban youth lives (Duncan-Andrade, 2009). Fostering solidarity between educators and students is an example of Socratic Hope. Duncan-Andrade articulates that this hope requires investment and both parties to "painfully examine our lives and actions within an unjust society and to share the sensibility that pain may pave the path to justice" (Duncan-Andrade, 2009). By confronting injustice directly, this perspective actively rejects false forms of hope. This form of critical hope "prioritizes the humanization of students above all else" (Duncan-Andrade, 2009), which forces the educator to place the student relationship in the center of educational motives. Duncan-Andrade suggests that the rapport established in this relationship allows educators "the right to demand levels of commitment that often defy even the students' notions of their capabilities" (Duncan-Andrade, 2009). Lastly, Audacious Hope addresses the lived experiences of injustice that affect the daily lives of urban students and places their well-being before academic performance. Audacious Hope is the shared burden of suffering and solidarity between teachers and students (Duncan-Andrade, 2009). Duncan-Andrade best puts this by saying that "false hope would have us believe in individualized notions of success and suffering, but Audacious Hope demands that we reconnect to the collective by struggling alongside one another, sharing in the victories *and* pain" (Duncan-

Andrade, 2009).

Role of the Student

Students should be at the center of education and play a crucial role as the indicators of the direction of theoretical and practical methods. In an ideal educational structure where this is followed, students would be encouraged and supported to explore their inquiry and have confidence in their autonomy to influence educational aims, theories, and practices.

Noddings adds to this notion by insisting that education be geared toward treating and teaching students as members of a democracy. She states that, like language acquisition, learning is most effective when its significance is not revealed in the distant future but serves the purpose of the here and now (Noddings, 1995). Similarly, students grasp concepts that relate directly to applications in their present, lived experience. Noddings suggests that the experiences, opinions, and identities that the students bring into the classroom every day should be acknowledged by the teacher and reflected through the curriculum. Since this is not the case in most schools, students learn that the subject matter taught in class does not apply to their lives outside the classroom. Referring back to Freire's banking model, which views students as "empty vessels," this projection of ignorance onto students takes for granted the knowledge that students have to offer to the class. The ideal role of the student should be to lead educational pursuits, and many benefits could result from students being open and willing to learn about and from one another.

In his work, *Teaching Strategies For Ethnic Studies*, James A. Banks addresses some of the students' identities and explains the implications of the growing ethnic diversity in the United States within the classroom. Banks summarizes the data from the Population Reference Bureau and the U.S Census Bureau, stating that ethnic groups of color have grown substantially in the last three decades, making up 33% of the U.S. population (Banks, 1975). This diversity is beautiful, but it also means that some longstanding, orthodox traditions and practices within the U.S., such as educational institutions, must reform to serve this collaboration better.

Banks says that educators need to incorporate a multicultural view into the school's pedagogy

and praxis to not only accommodate students from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds but also as a commitment to providing a multiple-perspective and meaningful education to single-race-identified White students. Bank says this best: "Ethnic, cultural, language and religious diversity is also an opportunity. Diversity enriches society by providing novel ways to view events and situations, solve problems, and view our relationship with the environment and other creatures" (Banks, 1975). The students that the U.S. pledges to educate are individuals with their own stories, beliefs, and experiences. Utilizing these aspects of students' lives and incorporating them into the curriculum makes students more socially aware of themselves and their classmates. Education should be structured to encompass a diverse array of individuals. Thus, a cookie-cutter curriculum based on prejudiced notions of who comprises a student can potentially alienate the multiplicity and does not enhance students' critical development.

Role of Family and Community

Throughout Dewey's writing and theories, he makes clear that teaching is most effective when practices relate directly to students' experiences. Because family and community are significant factors in a student's life, they should also play an essential role in the conditions of their lived experience. These factors should also have a role in shaping educational policies. When discussing multiculturalism, Noddings emphasizes that communities of individuals with shared identities play a vital role in preserving culture and should be carefully considered when defining the aims of education. By considering immigrant cultures in America, Noddings references Jane Addams, who rejects the notion that the aims of multicultural education serve the purpose of assimilating but should work to both "help people succeed as Americans (to 'assimilate') *and* to retain pride in their original culture" (Noddings, 1995). By understanding the cultural background, community ties, and family dynamics of students, teachers can be more informed about the lives of their students outside of the classroom. Teachers working with the families and communities of students can better work together to provide the students with the care and support they need throughout their educational development.

A broader frame that addresses the current discussion of the best educational practices that

integrate diverse cultures is cosmopolitanism. Noddings references Martha Nussbaum's definition of cosmopolitanism— "recognizing moral obligations to the rest of the world" (Noddings, 1995), by asking if and how national patriotism can promote global connectedness. Critics of Nussbaum's cosmopolitan ideal argue that individuals must establish intimate relationships within their inner circles before advancing to the "moral obligations" of cosmopolitanism. Noddings deduced that educators should encourage patriotism in *all* students, including those native to America.

Adding to the discussion about cosmopolitan beliefs, Iris Marion Young discusses some global structures that contribute to and sustain the harsh realities of sweat-shop workers in her book *Responsibility Across Borders*. She addresses humans' responsibilities in demanding justice for one another. She says it is widely accepted among philosophers that "people have obligations of justice only to other people with whom they live together under common constitutions, or whom they recognize as belonging to the same nation as themselves" (Young, 2011). Still, she expands on that notion to add that individuals do not need to share a community or even a nation-state to feel and understand the global obligation. Young says that obligations of justice are generated by the social contract, which can extend across borders by sharing common interests or social practices such as religion, art, science, political beliefs, or services (Young, 2011). She says collective action between members with similar agendas can create global change!

Best Instructional Practices

Emphasized in *Teaching Instruction in America*, Dewey's main criticism of educational practices is that they do not reflect the "continuity of mental activity" constantly happening in and outside the classroom. Dewey emphasizes that effective instructional practices should demonstrate to students how the subject matter embodies the mental operations connected to it (Dewey, 1904). Current teaching practices that isolate subject matter distinctly separate from mental development become stagnant since connections to relevancies within the students' active thoughts and other lived experiences are not made evident through these teachings.

Dewey insists that the isolation of subject matter precisely disrupts the student's mental activity, stating, "I do not suppose any great argument is needed to prove that breach of continuity between learning within and without the school is the great cause in the education of wasted power and misdirected efforts" (Dewey, 1904). Dewey hints at an ideology surrounded by educational practices. He says that the institutionalized approach of the academic structure treats teaching practices as isolated events from the outside world. This ideology perpetuates the notion (in both student and teacher) that the classroom is the only space where true academic learning (thus, authentic and official) can occur, and all learning outside of that space does not hold as much validity. Dewey describes this by stating, "This isolation is both unnecessary and harmful. It is unnecessary, tending to futility, because it throws away or makes light of the greatest asset in the student's possession—the greatest, moreover, that ever will be in his possession—his own direct and personal experience. There is every presumption that he has been learning all the days of his life and that he is still learning from day to day" (Dewey, 1904). Good instructional practices account for the lived experiences of the student and do not try to separate the relevancies in the student's life from the relevancies of the subject matter. The best learning experiences come from instructors who realize that the brain does not compartmentalize and can draw upon what students already know to make the lesson plan more meaningful.

After reviewing the American Music Therapy Association's (AMTA) Preamble to their Code of Ethics, it became clear that the welfare and inclusion of the client's therapeutic aims are foundational to the practices to which AMTA is dedicated. A wide range of musical therapy practices and methods are targeted explicitly toward the assistance of mental, physical, emotional, or psychological enhancement. Because the objectives of the therapeutic aims are individually specified, the client and music therapist work closely to maintain consistent communication to accomplish the set-out goal. The Preamble to their Code of Ethics states that the profession's fundamental purposes are the progressive development of music to accomplish therapeutic aims and the advancement of training, education, and research in music therapy.

Our objectives are to determine and utilize music therapy approaches that effectively aid in restoring, maintaining, and improving mental and physical health. To that end, we believe in the dignity and worth of every person. We promote the use of music in therapy, establish and maintain high standards in public service, and require of ourselves the utmost in ethical conduct (Preamble and Purpose, n.d.).

Along these lines, the welfare and dignity of the client are of the utmost importance and align with the AMTA standards of practice. Depending on the client's needs, a "curriculum" would be designed involving their input and capabilities. Slightly contrasting the aims of education that Dewey laid out, Music Therapy is a method utilized by the client as a source of cooperative rehabilitation to accomplish an individualistic goal.

Conclusion

This course has exposed me to new theories and practices of teaching that have given me insight into the philosophies that guide and produce quality teachers. Observing and working alongside this teaching cohort has been an eye-opening experience to the amount of work that goes into developing "intellectually independent" teachers. Witnessing the quality teachers this program has turned out has been a very uplifting experience. My own philosophies surrounding educational theories, pursuits, and practices have developed greatly after taking this course. I aim to apply these principles and philosophies to other aspects of my life. Influenced by John Dewey, I plan to continue using my trial-and-error process. The benefits that can emerge from the analysis of self-reflection are too often taken for granted. A further goal for myself is to identify what cognitive development I am gaining outside of the classroom and apply it to what I already know.

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