Educating the Whole Student for a Better Life

Christopher Vazquez

Cosc604: Foundations of Education and School Counseling (D04)

Dr. Carrie Link

December 12, 2021

Abstract

Educators should teach young students with the mindset of a holistic approach. In their teachings, they should include lessons on how to recognize and express one's emotions. Teachers need to intentionally set aside time during the day for students to free and openly express how they feel. Once a student feels comfortable expressing his or her feelings the teacher should then walk the student through the process of seeing and meeting the needs of their fellow students. This approach will help to create a well-rounded student who will be able to become an adult who can contribute to a better society.

School education should have a lifelong impact on children. This impact should help propel them into their future and throughout the rest of their lives. As students age, they need to be able to adapt and grow within the society around them. I believe that students should be taught the basics of learning math, English, science, history, and writing; but should also be taught holistic learning which includes problem-solving skills, self-reflection, and embracing and controlling emotions. Once students learn how to do these things, they should be taught how to apply them to life situations daily.

Philosophy of Schools and learning

School educators today fail to equip the whole being of a student. They mainly focus on exterior behaviors and fail to provide their students with practical real-life applications. These failures leave students with a disconnect from society and create an educational void for them to fill in later in life. I experienced this firsthand in my education. My high school placed a heavy emphasis on keeping rules and dressing appropriately but failed to teach practical life lessons. I was placed in an extracurricular math course that taught us how to balance a checkbook and how to do taxes. The class also included problem-solving skills. My friends who did not take that class missed out on a practical life lesson. We went to the same school, yet we were not given the same opportunity for life growth. Graham (2009) discusses a similar point.

He speaks about the flaws in education from a religious point of view. He uses a real school but changes the name to protect the innocent. The school used values and learning theories they thought would benefit students, but they only caused long-term struggles. He interviewed a former female student who gave testimony to the struggles she faces as an adult due to her weak schooling. She claimed that the school taught her to work for a reward and that all the answers to life's problems can be found in textbooks. She later found out that the real world doesn't work

that way. She explained how the workforce doesn't reward you for doing your job, it's just expected of you, and that the answers to life's problems are not found in a textbook. She feels weak and cannot be productive on her own. She also expressed how the school taught her to be "a good religious girl" but never talked to her about real problems in life.

Educators know that the system is broken and needs change and are doing their best to do so. They have started by asking "why do we need to change"? In the *British Journal of educational psychology,* Desan (2021) answers the question "why" by conducting a long-term student health project. He wanted to show people why the education system needs to be changed. The students who were not taught holistic learning showed lacking in many different areas of life. He and his team who helped to create the project took first-year high school students from nine different classrooms. Of the students participating in the study, half were given a test that focused on traditional psychology. The other half was given a test that presented new philosophy in interventions. The results showed that the students who took the test of the intervention were well educated, mentally stronger, and were able to connect better with people in society. Educators know why the system needs to change. Our current one is producing an incomplete and weak society.

Instructional Practice

Children and adults learn in many ways. I believe that young school students should be learning emotionally and even spiritually in addition to their academic learning. This balance will help to create a holistic child who will do well in society. The term epistemology is defined as "the area of philosophy that examines knowing and the theories of knowledge" (Ornstein et al.,2018). It is the gateway through which teachers and educators can provide this balance for their students. Haave and keus (2019) address this issue. They talk about how as children

progress in their academic learning; they fail to progress in metacognition. Haave and Keus (2019) define metacognition as “the thinking about thinking”. This is the process of a student being able to think through their own thinking. They intentionally stop and work through things inside their head. Metacognition can lead to huge breakthroughs in emotional and spiritual learning. Students have what I like to call a “lightbulb” moment. It is when a student understands the knowledge of what they are learning. I recently witnessed this firsthand with my two nephews. My older nephew accidentally bumped into his baby sibling, knocking him to the ground. I could see on his face that he realized he made a mistake and then proceeded to fix it. He helped his sibling up off the floor making sure he was ok then apologized for the accident. At that moment he knew what he did was wrong and could mentally walk himself through those emotions. I enjoy seeing my students and others grow emotionally. As an educator, I have learned about many different philosophies related to education. Two philosophies that I enjoy the most are pragmatism (also called experimentalism) and existentialism. Ornstein (2018) tells that with every philosophy comes an epistemology. The epistemology for pragmatism says that knowing (or understanding) comes from experiences and the scientific method. This includes creating experiments to see how something works. The epistemology for existentialism says that knowledge comes from the choices a person makes (Ornstein et al.,2018). These two philosophies help in the emotional growth of a student. I do my best to implement them in the classroom with my students. I teach pragmatism by intentionally making time for students to get into small groups and just talk about how they are feeling that day. I ask them questions to get their minds going on how they can embrace their feelings. I also help to show them how they can see the emotions of other people around them. Once my students see that their peers feel and think like they do I help to teach them how they can meet the emotional needs of one another. I

also implement existentialism by taking the time to point my students' choices. When a student makes a choice, whether positive or negative, I walk them through the consequences that follow. I hope to meet all the needs of my students, particularly their emotional ones. I hope that my students will grow into adults who will make a positive impact on their society.

Teacher-Learner Relationships

When it comes to a child's education the teacher-learner relationship is key! The teacher and the student must be able to connect if the student is to grow emotionally and academically. The role of the learner (student) is to come before the teacher with an open mind and a willingness to learn. The student must be able to show respect to their teacher no matter what. Students often disagree with their teachers and do not respect them. This causes a rift in their education. The role of the teacher is very similar to that of a student. A teacher must be able to show patience and respect to their students. The teacher must set boundaries with their students but also be able to connect with them on an emotional level. Kruszewska (2020) does a great job expressing this concept. She created a survey for students in Poland and their teachers. The survey asked the students what they thought about their teachers and how they could better connect. It helped to create transparency between the teachers and students. Transparency and respect are both needed in a student-teacher relationship. In my life, I have experienced this in both a positive and negative way. I had a high school teacher who brought her life problems into the classroom and took her frustrations out on her students. I did not learn well in her class. I had to work hard to show her respect even though she did not show did not respect her students. In college, I had the complete opposite. I had a professor who loved all her students and was willing to go the extra mile to help us. She would take the time to get to know each of us in a personal way. She made sure we understood all our assignments and if we didn't, she was more than

willing to walk us through them again until we did. She set the greatest example of what a teacher-learner relationship should look like.

Diversity

Diversity is a big topic of discussion in today's educational world. Teachers must be highly aware of the diverse population of students in the classroom. Factors such as social class, race, ethnicity, and home environment must be considered by a teacher. Today's society has been divided into the categories of the upper class, middle class, and lower class. All of these are based on the amount of money and property a person owns. Those who have a lot of money and property would be considered upper class. People who have some property and enough money to get by in life are in the middle class and those who have neither money nor property are in the lower class. Those who are in the lower class often tend to have more problems with violence than those in the classes above them. Teachers need to be aware of a student's social class to better help them in the classroom. Another thing teachers need to be aware of is a student's race and ethnicity. Race and ethnicity are often used interchangeably. A student may be treated differently by his peers based on the color of his skin. This is racism and sadly still exists in our world today. It is the teacher's job to consider all these things when teaching a classroom full of students. They must work hard to provide a safe environment for students to come and learn.

My Calling

I am an educator and a Christian. I believe in God. The Bible says in Matthew 7:12 "Do unto others what you would want to do unto you". God has given me a gift of loving others and I want to use that gift to help young people. I want to help students grow in all areas of life, which include emotional and academic learning. I work hard to better myself so that way I have more to give back to my students.

Conclusion

Young students need a solid education that will help prepare them for the rest of their lives. They need to be taught the basics of learning such as math, English, science, history, and writing; but also, be taught how to understand and regulate their emotions. Learning in this capacity will allow students to be able to apply their educational skills to all aspects of their lives. Through their strong holistic education, students will grow into adults who will be able to change their society for the better.

References

Desan, P. H., Setton, M. K., Holzer, A. A., Young, K. C., Sun, Y., He, F., Li, B., Weinstein, A. J., & Yu, X. (2021). Attitude change after a curriculum on the science and Philosophy of Well-being and happiness for high school students: A classroom-randomized trial. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, *91*(4), 1333–1348. https://doi.org/10.1111/bjep.12419

Graham, D. L. (2009). *Teaching redemptively: Bringing grace and truth into your classroom*. Purposeful Design Publications.

Haave, N., & Keus, K. (2019). Learning philosophy assignments as metacognitive instruction in postsecondary education. *The National Teaching & Learning Forum*, *28*(2), 3–5. https://doi.org/10.1002/ntlf.30185

Kruszewska, A. (2020). Teachers' understanding of the role of key competences in working with children: A study of the perceptions of early years educators in southern Poland. *Education 3-13*, 1–11. https://doi.org/10.1080/03004279.2020.1762691

Ornstein, A. C., Levine, D. U., Gutek, G. L., & Vocke, D. E. (2018). *Foundations of Education*. Cengage Learning.