

## Yvonne V. Richardson's Educational Philosophy

In music and in art, harmony is described as a pleasing and balanced arrangement of three parts. If harmony is a dynamic equilibrium that generates interest, then a harmonious educational philosophy is an interrelated set of values and beliefs that provides a consistent basis for making choices. A philosophy shaped by three theorists contains the means to realize educational goals, in the same manner that a triangle can contain items. My educational philosophy, therefore, is a three-point construct for enabling succeeding generations to fulfill themselves and take their place in a complex and often confusing world.

Educators should survey curricular and educational practices to determine where their philosophy resides within the overarching discipline and their specific subject matter. I decided how to position my construct on the educational landscape by arranging its points as "one voice dominating, and the remaining as accompanying parts". Imposing this order means the cornerstone of my philosophy is John Dewey, but I also draw on Abraham Maslow and Jean Piaget. When I examined my philosophy I found the lens of Bloom's Taxonomy, which provides the perspective to recognize potential for social progress or reform. Consequently, the attached graphic describes the relationship between my teaching and these philosophers. My philosophy requires that I:

- Investigate the natural world as it relates to secondary and post-secondary mathematics and technology education
- Capitalize on items that resonate with my construct to prescriptively infuse humanistic models into constructivist courses
- Conduct relevant, rigorous research to develop carefully planned topics that my students can explore to acquire knowledge

The schooling that I create for students with this philosophy will prepare them for success in academia or technical markets. When students are knowledgeable about important issues, and are able to understand the complex world in which we live, then my philosophical construct will have brought us closer to our educational and societal ideals.

John Dewey's philosophy is based on discovering the potential of the student, and adapting it to be of use within a society. "The (teacher enters) into the child's life and (sees) what it is ready for, and upon what material it could work". Observation of the development of student skills and interests is of the utmost importance for the educator. Otherwise, the student would only engage in self-exploration of personal power as allowed by their social situations. Although this is one definition of education, the student receives greater benefit by schooling, which is defined as organized inquiry into a discipline. Students that are schooled by a knowledgeable teacher will explore and absorb a subject more rigorously than individuals who are engrossed in self-study; the exception is individuals who have learned to perform self-study as rigorously as they approached their schooling. My educational philosophy makes the student explore the subject matter with a rigorous approach, so that the impact of the combination can be observed long after the students have completed their studies.

The philosophy of Piaget implies that students strive to construct meaning and models that organize and explain the world around them. Educators use constructivist methodologies to empower student-centered learning. One outcome is students who are more knowledgeable than if they had remained in text-based, traditional educational environments. As an educator who believes in student-centered learning, I can use those

student experiences to teach those who may not be as confident in my subject or in their personal beliefs. To mitigate the criticism that constructivist education does not work well outside its controlled environment, I use Bloom's Taxonomy, so that students develop advanced skills, rather than memorize text and demonstrate constructs by rote. If I am empowered to care for others as a collaborative effort, then the collaboration should synergistically achieve more than we could as individuals.

Including Maslow in my philosophy allows me to address student learning with comprehensive, progressive, and humanistic techniques. The humanistic concept of self-actualization increases the effect of Bloom's Taxonomy. The feedback from success earns self-esteem and respect; when students move higher on Maslow's Pyramid of the Hierarchy of Need, their results are also higher in Bloom's Taxonomy. They will move into research where open-ended answers are not pre-existing components of the educational experience, climbing Maslow's self-actualization pyramid to explore extensions to innate human curiosity.

The borders of my philosophy imply the existence of ideals that are outside the purview of the construct. I expect my students to encounter these borders, which reflects Piaget's formal operational stage. Students learn not to expect everything from one source, and they will decide whether staying with the classroom is more important than following their own ideals. I may transfer these students by aptitude to classes that engage their interests, whether they are advanced placement, college transfers, or private lessons. Some schools recognize that teachers grow in the same manner, and as I gain seniority I would also leave some regular classes and immerse myself in subjects I like best. Therefore, my philosophy does not need to change with every educational program. It consistently informs my teaching with techniques that are about other people, about networking, about observing where people are and how to help them get where they are going.

If I applied my philosophy to my own learning, I would realize that cultural motivation is supplied by the user of the tool, rather than the tool itself. I expect my classes to encounter culturally implicit values as we progress toward explicit goals that uphold our societal ideals. My cultural motivation is that all Americans must have a solid education in science, mathematics, and technology, and the computer science field is moving away from the discipline of mathematics to combine with the field of electrical engineering. Because I also require further certification, every ounce of my learning experience makes me a better educator, or can be focused on earning my Ph.D. Self-actualization empowers me to reach the most students most of the time. Being an educator empowers me to explore peripheral interests, and now that computers are integral to education, to electronic engineering, and to the medical sciences, opportunities for research may reprioritize my interests where the sciences intersect. In summation, my philosophy encapsulates the following motivation:

My professional responsibilities translate my educational philosophy to policy and procedure by effectively developing student-centered experiences for information transfer, response strengthening, and knowledge construction.