

Personal Philosophy of Education

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Throughout history and into the present day, students and educators have faced the question of why education is necessary and its purpose. Many scholars have presented varying theories or philosophies of education in an attempt to answer this question, but none have offered as fulfilling an answer as essentialism. The purpose of education, which can be accomplished through the educational philosophy of essentialism, is to prepare and mold students, by instilling in them the necessary knowledge and skills needed, to be deep-thinking, functional, and contributing individual members of society.

Philosophy of Schools and Learning

Essentialism is a philosophy of education that holds to the idea that the purpose of education is to inculcate students with the ability to become contributing members of society, and in turn, keep society functioning. “Essentialists believe that teachers should try to embed traditional moral values and virtues such as respect for authority, perseverance, fidelity to duty, consideration for others, and practicality and intellectual knowledge that students need to become model citizens” (“Essentialism,” n.d.). Moral values such as these must be taught diligently to impressionable children so that they grow up to carry out these values once they have left the classroom and entered into society. A moral and good society is dependent on its citizens holding moral and good values; without education to teach this, society is liable to have higher crime rates, less aid to those in need, citizens would be less inclined to carry out civic duties such as voting, and a myriad of other societal collapses would begin to take place. Essentialism emphasizes the authority of the teacher, hard work and rigor in the classroom is

commended, the subject matter is at the center of the curriculum, and the curriculum seeks to transfer the essential skills and knowledge needed to create a well-balanced citizen (Sahin, 2018). Teaching the authority of the teacher in the classroom helps students understand government authorities, emphasizing hard work and rigor in schoolwork will prepare students to become hard workers with strong work ethics, and centering the curriculum, that is skills and knowledge necessary to become well-rounded citizens, teaches students the importance of their future role in society. “By focusing on essential knowledge and skills, students are better prepared to tackle complex problems and adapt to changing circumstances in their personal and professional lives” (“Essentialism in education,” 2023). Instilling students with not only basic knowledge of core subjects, but also critical thinking skills, the means to be deep-thinkers, and problem-solving skills, ought to allow them to be able to handle almost every situation and circumstance thrown at them in the workforce and in adulthood. The purpose of schools, learning, and education is to bring up the next generation equipped to perform in society.

Instructional Practice

In order to fulfill the stated purpose of education, certain instructional practices must take place. In essentialist classrooms, teachers implement structured and precise curricula around the core subjects of math, science, social studies, and English/language arts; teachers manage their classrooms with efficiency, effectiveness, discipline, order, and an emphasis on academic achievement (Ornstein, Levine, Gutek, & Vocke, 2015). Instruction is carefully divided by the core subjects and can be taught through various means of instruction. Though the means and method through which the curriculum is taught can vary, the subject matter must be at the core of

the instruction and the classroom must be run with organization, productivity in mind, and some level of strictness. Essentialists hold that “Skills such as reading, writing, computers, and measurement should be taught to elementary students, subjects [should] usually focus on creativity, apart from art and music, and students [should be] provided a bundle of information and techniques to enable them to transition from less to more complex knowledge and skills” (“Essentialism in education,” n.d.). Skills and information are taught early on to students, with the expectation they will master those skills and retain that knowledge to achieve academic success and continue to the next level. The essentialist classroom can be achieved through rigorous instruction, the means of which can vary, based on the core subjects.

Teacher-Learner Relationship

In essentialism, there is a clear teacher-learner relationship laid out to achieve the purpose of education. “Essentialism is a teacher-centered philosophy of education... Essentialists believe that the essentialist teacher is going to be more technically skilled in their field so they can advance students learning... The teacher not only needs to consider the content being taught, but the environment in which it is being taught as well” (Perez, 2022). The teacher has the authority in the classroom, all information is taught by the teacher to the student, and the teacher decides how the information is taught. Students, in turn, are to be under the authority of their teacher, learning the information being taught to them. Students are expected to hold academic success in high esteem and work diligently to advance their academic careers. As essentialism is teacher-centered, the teacher is to transfer their knowledge to the student and the student is to obtain, understand, and use that knowledge.

Diversity

Though essentialism is strict in centering the subject in the curriculum and keeping a well-managed classroom, there is room to vary and differentiate instruction to meet the needs of diverse learners. These learners could include students who English is their second language, students with learning disabilities, students with special needs, students with physical disabilities, students from different cultures, and students who learn through certain modalities. “Teachers must also be mindful of the needs and interests of their students, and be willing to adapt their teaching methods to meet the needs of different learners. This may involve providing additional support to struggling students, or offering extension activities and projects for advanced learners” (“Essentialism in education,” 2023). In essentialism, if a student is struggling in reading, adapting to diversity does not mean cutting reading out of the curriculum, as the core subjects are the center of instruction, but differentiating the instruction in reading to aid that student in their understanding of the essential information being taught to them.

Conclusion

The intention and purpose of education, as seen through the lens of essentialism, is for a teacher to instill their knowledge of a certain subject matter to students in order to give them the essential knowledge and skills needed to be functioning adults in society. Essentialism allows for diversity in the classroom while still instilling in students the necessary components to fulfill the purpose of school.

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