My Philosophical Classroom

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Growing up in school, I have been exposed to various different teachers who all had very unique ways in which they conducted their classes and presented their classrooms. Over the years as a student I was able to experience these different types of teaching and environments and learned very quickly what worked for me or what I liked and what didn't work as well for me. Upon creating my own philosophical classroom, I took into consideration these things and created a classroom I found would be productive, welcoming, and create equal learning opportunities for every student.

All throughout my grade school and highschool experiences, I had very traditional classroom layouts in which the students sat at individual desks and faced the board. Although this seems like the most practical layout, I always felt it wasn't necessarily inviting the students to participate as it implies they should only be listening to the teacher. Because of this, my philosophical classroom would be set up in a large circle or students would simply sit around a large table to create more of a seminar or discussion type of situation to make students feel as though they are equals and have the equal right to participate and speak along with the teacher, breaking the barrier or the idea of the teacher being in control thus creating a more democratic learning environment. I also feel as though this is a great example of a pragmatic classroom which is an educational philosophy I relate to a lot which fosters more meaningful learning as the students are not simply being force fed the knowledge but rather are encouraged to learn alongside the teacher. "Foucault sheds more light on pedagogical power relationships by contrasting the two most prominent forms of instruction: the lecture and the seminar (Foucault, 1971:199-200). He argues that the lecture, that apparently non-reciprocal and unequal power relationship, is more honest and less devious than the seminar about the relationships of power which inevitably invest in each of them." (Deacon 2006). Similar to my own experiences, this quote from our course readings demonstrates the importance of a seminar based classroom for student success and participation which further proves my point and reassures me in creating my own classroom that this is the best classroom structure. In this classroom, the expectation of the students is to participate in peer to peer discussions and contribute to their own learning through inquiry and discussion, and the role of the teacher is to facilitate and participate in the discussions as well, learning alongside their students.

As I stated in my previous argument, I don't think the teacher standing at the front of the class feeding the students information is very productive nor teaches the students very much, therefore, learning in my classroom would be done through seminar based discussions in which students would be able to actively participate in their own learning. Students would apply their knowledge individually by doing activities such as presentations or assignments to demonstrate their understanding of what was talked about. The reason I chose for students to do their work individually is because, personally, as an introvert I was never someone to speak up when I was placed in a group with my peers as I saw my ideas as less valuable than those of others therefore I feel like it hindered my ability to reach my full potential and I want

to avoid that for my future students. In his work 'Michael Foucault on Education: A preliminary theoretical overview', (Deacon 2006) shares a quote from Michael Foucault in which he speaks about group work in the classroom negatively in saying "Group work, though less elitist, may enhance inter-peer politics at the risk of promoting unequal participation and domination by a few." (Foucault 2006). I also feel as though this is effective as it gives extroverted students the chance to participate and speak in the seminars, however gives everyone an opportunity to thrive on the actual assessed aspects of the course.

As we know having been through the education system and being educators, assessment is a necessary part in student development and learning, however, I feel as though we have been brainwashed into thinking the only form of assessment is standardized testing which has been detrimental to some students as it doesn't account for different types of learners or students with testing anxiety and therefore results in unequal opportunity for some students. In an interview in the required readings, Andrew Ho comments on this idea of standardized testing in sating "So I, and many other psychometricians, measurement folks, have really mixed feelings about tests. We want to improve them, we believe that they're powerful, but we believe they're also just sort of too powerful sometimes and people simplify what educational quality and opportunity is to a single number that is useful but imperfect." (Andersen 2019). As opposed to learning aspect of the class which is done through group work and participation, assessments would be done individually to ensure that all students are on the correct path as well as to avoid students being paired with people who do all the work or to avoid students feeling uncomfortable about participating due to peer judgement which would prevent them from reaching their full potential. The students' knowledge would be acquired through having students create portfolios of their course work such as projects, presentations, etc. I feel as though this takes away the stress of learning and makes the learning way more meaningful and takes away the idea that the students are simply learning the material to get a good grade then move on, I feel like this way will make the course content stick with the student more.

In terms of the feeling or energy of my classroom, it would have a very warm and welcoming environment in which the students respect one another and feel like they can trust each other as well as me. Ways in which this may be done are through things such as morning meetings. Morning Meeting is a purposeful time during the school day that sets the tone for "respectful learning and establishes a climate of trust" (Kriete, 2002, p. 9). By creating a community with a climate of trust, students will feel comfortable taking risks and trusting their classmates, all of which work toward the goal of promoting a positive social-emotional setting which will result in increased academic achievement. (Williams 2017). I think that this is very important for the mental health and well-being of my students as well as academically as they will be more open to asking me or their peers for guidance. Being someone who was always too shy to participate in class I missed out on a lot of learning opportunities therefore I want to prevent any of my students from feeling this way as well. I always felt like in my University courses that were seminar and discussion based, I felt a lot

more confident, which is why I think the circle table idea and all my other ideas will help create this accepting and judgement free environment as students will be so used to discussing with one another they will feel comfortable enough to share their ideas as they come to their minds.

One teaching approach that stresses the importance of building a community of learners and shows evidence of Dewey's theories in the 21st century is the Responsive Classroom curriculum. It is a research-based approach to teaching grades K-8, that focuses on the strong link between academic achievement and social-emotional learning. The premise behind the Responsive Classroom approach is that a high-quality education is built on the foundation of a safe and happy learning community (Responsive Classroom, n.d.). (Williams 2017). Upon learning about the idea of the responsive classroom throughout this course, I found it to be something I was very drawn to as it creates an equal opportunity for all students to demonstrate what they've learned while taking into consideration their interests and talent. Because of this, my classroom would function as a responsive classroom meaning that the learning is student-centered, and takes a social and emotional learning approach. Due to this democratic idea students would have academic choice meaning they may choose the way in which they learn, for example there would still be core concepts that students have to understand throughout their work but giving them more creative freedom as to how they demonstrate their understanding i.e. through art, presentations, essay, etc.

Upon presenting my philosophical classroom outline to the class, I felt the reception of my ideas was very positive as I tried to make the classroom as appealing to everyone as possible by taking into consideration the various types of students and learners that would step foot in the class. I also feel like my ideas accurately portrayed the concepts learned in class therefore my peers were more open to these ideas having already learned about them and discussed them in class. Upon receiving feedback on the outline, I decided to keep the same ideas in my final paper but expand upon them to make it more clear what the specific expectations of the students and teacher are in this classroom as well as to further explain myself in the choices I made regarding the structure of the classroom and the way its conducted.

# References

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