

Philosophy of Education: Love as the central element.

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### Abstract

Education is central to success in life. To be effective, educators must successfully transmit material to willing recipients. Success for the educator is measured by student retention of educational objectives. This means that the educator must capture the attention of the student and instill in them a value for the subject. For Christian educators the best means of doing this includes love and concern for others. Properly placed, this love and concern carries far beyond the four walls of the classroom and beyond the years in school.

## **Introduction**

Education is the process of transmitting values and knowledge from one generation to the next. The successful teacher extends academic content while weaving love into the fabric of the goals and objectives of the classroom.

### **Worldview and Philosophy of Life**

Although it is not impossible to apply biblical worldview to a secular educational experience, the best fit for the full implementation of an educational program rooted in a biblical worldview is in a Christian school environment. All too often public schools become centers of conflict. Students often arrive at school carrying the burden of unresolved conflict and ideology that offers no solutions to their daily issues. This limits the ability of the environment for advancement of the student's education.

It has been noted that spirituality and academics are closely intertwined (Carr, 2003). Secular education denies the relationship between academic pursuit and spirituality often resulting in a system that is devoid of philosophical, moral and spiritual identity (Carr, 2003). This technical vacuum reduces education to cold terms of expectation.

Christian schools tend to be more overt about our promotion of our worldview. The gospel is at the center of the Christian worldview, and at the core of the gospel is love. Anything a Christian does should be encompassed in love and respect for others, thus, as a Christian educator, all I do in the classroom and in other student activities should be infused with healthy portions of love and respect for those with whom I am interacting. All the Christian teacher does should be

directed by his love and concern for his fellow man – loving others just as Christ loved us.

### **Philosophy of Schools and Learning**

Schools need to be a place of refuge from the daily chaos in which some students find themselves. It should be a nurturing place for them to express themselves and contact new ideas and perspectives without fear of rejection. At the same time, students need to understand the need for direction and correction in the educational process.

Henry Pestalozzi proved that a teacher who truly cares for his pupils is able to have a real impact on educational outcomes. He demanded excellence and let his students know that he loved them in real, tangible ways. Additionally, he went on to demonstrate that students respond well to a teacher who demands excellence from them.

The Bible states in Proverbs 13:24 “He who spares the rod hates his son.” The concept of a rod, here is one of a shepherd’s staff, not a disciplinary tool. This then directs us to the understanding that children should be given responsibilities in learning. In effect, the education process should develop ownership. The child should be motivated to value their education and be an active participant in advancing their education. Christian school students are encouraged to respect the sacrifice of their parents and classmates, and in so doing, make real efforts to succeed academically (Van Brummelen, 2009).

For the Christian educator and student, the mission of the education is ultimately wrapped in the gospel. The truth of the Word is expressed in all subjects.

Science and mathematics show the order God placed in all things. The arts show the beauty in even the simplest things. History shows God's hand in human events and His concern for us. English and foreign languages give us the ability to communicate our understanding of God's love with others. Students need to understand just how each component of their education fits into their ability to share their hearts with those in their lives. Understanding that there is more to life than fulfilling our own selfish desires is where true meaning in life can be found. Students come to know and address the world around them through the lens of love, respect and concern for others.

### **Educational Practice**

As a Christian educator it is ultimately important to instill eternal values in what is taught. Students need to see that what they are being challenged to learn has real application and an eternal worth (Schultz, 1998). I was fortunate enough to have been educated in a school that did just that. Over the years, it has been said that those who invested in me while I was in High School have successfully been replicated in me. I know how much they loved me and they clearly taught courses from a biblical perspective and continually pointed it all back to our responsibility to share the truth we have with others (Schultz, 1998). I can only hope to have the same impact on my own students.

Cooperative learning methods can be excellent for building respect for others. As students work together, they encourage each other. This cooperative relationship in the classroom necessarily spills over into other areas of the student's life allowing them to see the value in others around them.

### **Teacher-Learner Relationships**

In the classroom, the teacher's primary roll is as facilitator (Gutek, 1995). As such, the instructor helps students learn to apply the information presented in the curriculum and makes connection between what the student has already learned, what they will learn and what they are learning in other disciplines. A good facilitator-teacher will pull together the disparate bits of knowledge found in different courses into a more cohesive, unified thought. The role of the student is to use the classroom and curriculum as a springboard for advancing their knowledge and discovery. A good student will dig beyond what is discussed in class in order to tie together what some see as unrelated subjects to create intersections between them and build greater understanding (Gutek, 1995). This usually leads to the creation of questions for the teacher to address and continue the process of knowledge acquisition. This relationship helps advance the student's internal motivation for learning.

Pestalozzi advocated love in the educational model (Quick, 1890). He noted that it is important to cultivate the heart before the mind is developed. Developing a mind without dealing with the heart builds, in essence, smart criminals; devious, selfish minds that are much more difficult to correct later in life (Quick, 1890).

This process requires a good deal of mutual respect and love. A teacher who doesn't care for his students will refuse to put in the effort needed to make the seemingly invisible connections between the subjects and may even dismiss inquiry by students as a matter of course (Van Brummelen, 2009).

Classroom relationships of this depth require excellence of both the teacher and the student (Van Brummelen, 2009). As students are nurtured to embrace this process, the cooperative educational model will allow for it to spread to others.

### **Diversity**

Evangelical Christian schools fall into one of two major categories: outreach schools and covenant schools. The first group of schools has at the core of their mission a goal of using the education they provide to bring students and families to Christ. As a rule, these schools offer fewer barriers to admission and tend to be much more flexible with student issues once a student is admitted. They tend to be less expensive than covenant schools as well. Typically, this group is far more diverse in terms of socioeconomic and ethnic breakdown. Because of this diversity, the teacher needs to be better able to handle problems and situations from a number of socio-ethnic and worldview traditions (Van Brummelen, 2009).

Covenant schools take on education from a different starting point. In most covenant schools either the student or at least one of his or her parents must profess faith in Christ. This simple step in the admissions process makes all the difference (Schultz, 1998). Because covenant schools start with a basic foundation of philosophical agreement with the student or a significant stakeholder in the child's life, they lose some of the diversity that outreach schools bring to the education process. The strength in covenant schools is in their unity of ideology (Schultz, 1998). Covenant schools tend to be very active in involving their students in outreach. Teachers in covenant schools enjoy the support of parents so teachers enjoy a bit more freedom in instruction. In the covenant school diversity, must be

advanced by the teacher, whereas outreach schools enjoy the luxury of ethnic, social and ideological diversity built in.

### **Conclusion**

Love is the central message of the gospel. It offers hope and a future to all who accept it. As Christian educators, it is our responsibility to build love into the curriculum we use each day. It is only through this infusion of concern for our students that we convey real meaning with our classes. Students need to know that they are loved and that they need to respect and love others as unique creations of God (Schultz, 1998). Only then can their education be complete.



## References

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