

Philosophy of Teaching

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There is evidence from a number of disciplines to suggest some positive relationship between an individual's beliefs, values, or attitudes and the decisions and actions that make up one's daily life. Psychological theories, though they differ, often draw a correlation between beliefs, values and/or attitudes, and human behavior. On the basis of such theories, certain forms of treatment or therapy are proposed to help individuals change undesirable, ineffective, and counterproductive behaviors through a process that involves examining, clarifying, and perhaps changing what one believes (Zinn, 2004, p. 40).

My passion convenes in helping others examine approaches and beliefs that frame their lives; finding contradictions and exploring alternatives to create positive change. By providing an objective, guided opportunity for learners to unearth and acknowledge truths about themselves, they are equipped with the ability to develop intrapersonal and interpersonal skills and increase self-awareness. Acting as an organizer/facilitator and using methods of problem solving, experiential learning, experimental learning, individualized/self-directed learning, integrated/cooperative learning, etc., aligns my philosophy of teaching with Humanistic and Progressive Adult Education (Zinn, 2004). Assisting with the actualization of empowerment, something learners already possess and have yet to discover, is a fulfilling experience.

It is my belief that people do what they know, and to do differently they must take actions to know differently. This becomes clearer as individuals enter adulthood, transformed from dependent teenagers to self-sufficient, working adults. As such, they face requirements to have the adequate skills to meet job responsibilities and expectations to encompass the intrapersonal and interpersonal skills to manage emotions and work well with others. As the world evolves and technology advances it becomes essential that adults participate in continued education and affective development. Businesses are employing computers to accomplish the more logical tasks, and humans for critical and creative thinking. In his book, A

Whole New Mind, Daniel Pink examines this premise. Page by page he demonstrates the need to exercise and enhance the part of our mind that develops original ideas with right brain focused learning. Daniel Goleman's *Emotional Intelligence* explains research indicating self-awareness, along with intrapersonal and interpersonal skills, including empathy, is a determinate of performance. What these seemingly different books have in common is their teachings are both "left" aside in the traditional, foundational education model; nevertheless how critical they are to optimizing human performance and satisfaction.

Assessing and connecting with other writings and publications similar to the mentioned work of Pink and Goleman, has set the tone for my philosophy of teaching. Many adults, including myself, received education through the traditional classroom branded with competition, focus on individual work, destructive criticism, the hoarding of ideas (shared only with the teacher), and a general lack of trust among peers (Smith, 2010). This type of environment is conflicting to successful business practices; it does not encourage working with others or openly sharing and expanding on each other's ideas. It limits the opportunity of, therefore oppressing, affective development in the classroom. Paulo Freire states, "Only dialogue, which requires critical thinking, is also capable of generating critical thinking. Without dialogue there is no communication, and without communication there can be no true education" (Freire, 1993, p. 92).

Knowledge of self is an attribute essential for adult educators to be effective; they need to allow themselves to be ever changing (Galbraith, 2004). This holds true for all disciplines and every area of life, whether it is at work, home, or in society, adults with higher self-awareness and empathy generally are more in the flow of life rather than working against it. To gain

awareness learners must objectively observe oneself and the world they live in, engaging in creative exercises and critical thinking that challenge their comfortable ways of thinking and doing. Through this self-realization they will discover the contradictions of their espoused theories and their theories-in-use, generating an opportunity to grow and change.

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