

Philosophy of Teaching

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While it is fairly simple to state that my philosophy of teaching is that of a gift-giver – *meaning that is it incumbent upon both the gift-giver and the gift-receiver to be in certain states-of-mind to enable a successful 'gift-exchange/reception'*, I would like to deepen and expand on that basic premise within this paper. My point of view has been changed through personal experiences and teachings obtained through-out the EDAE-620 course from the text and other student mindsets shared through discussion. It was originally my hope when I started this journey to obtain some quantifiable/improved techniques when working/teaching/interacting with adults, but my view has taken a more holistic approach encompassing a wider range of viewpoints that I would not have as easily encountered and/or incorporated into my teaching styles. Maybe this is due mostly to the day-in-day-out encounters that I have with other electrical engineers and/or professionals within the power-system engineering community that



I've equated to be all adult learners. My need to 'take it deeper' was expressed eloquently by Elias and Merriam (1995) "Theory without practice leads to an empty idealism, and action without philosophical reflection leads to a mindless activism" (pg. 4). To help provide a systematic way to approach this type of thinking, Jerry Apps (during his tenure as a Professor at the University of Wisconsin-Madison) developed five categories/areas-of-focus that can help a teacher best determine and think through/develop their own philosophy of teaching (1973 & 1976). It is this structure I will use

to expound/expand/deepen my original statement of teaching philosophy:

1. **The Learner** – As an adult, I believe this person is solely responsible for the consequences of their decisions/actions and as the 'gift receiver' within my model, they should enter the classroom as an opportunity to clarify some of their questions, challenge some of their preconceptions, and be prepared to share with others their own life's experiences that have shaped them into the person they are (at which point, each person will need to reflect/determine how this input will shape their own learning experience).
2. **Overall Purpose of Adult Education** – Whether in a formal/arranged setting or happening at the 'speed of life', adult education is happening at all times and in all places. We (adults, that is) are constantly in situations in which we have to make decisions – which are mostly based on our past experiences/outcomes, calculation as to what the right/favorable outcome might be, or are reliving that ole saying that "Hindsight is 20/20" and just blindly guessing. It is the role of adult education to enable us to make better decisions and/or obtain skillsets that make our usefulness/benefits felt within the

environments that we want to make an impact in (e.g. work place, government, families, philanthropic endeavors, crime, etc).

3. **Content or Subject Matter** - I have heard it said that “the definition of a guru is a person that knows 5% more than you and travels greater than 20 miles to meet you”. This says to me that we all have some general/basic knowledge base about the subjects that interest us and/or we have to be involved in day-to-day. And while someone may have more experience in a specific focus of a topic; we all have something to share. Now, I have also heard the folklore saying attributed to Albert Einstein that, “If you can’t explain it simply, you don’t understand it well enough”. I’ve consistently used this to mean that learning content should be approached in a ‘building blocks’ mindset. If you want to explain something complex, start with some basics that the audience might have familiarity with (particularly using analogies to relate one subject to another) and continue to build from there.
4. **Learning Process** – Within this section I must honestly say that I’ve experienced the greatest change of mindset and have had my traditional biases challenged/shaped because of the AET program. Starting out, I fit the classical mold that says, ‘You Learn as you’ve been taught’ and really believe that this program would just provide ‘tweaks’ to improve this method. Having briefly investigated the variety of Visual, Auditory, and Kinesthetic learning profiles and completing/evaluating myself via the PALS inventory, PAEI, and Diablo Valley College’s Learning Style Survey and seeing the variety of possible outcomes takers could have achieved has really challenged how I view the adult learning process. Having said all of that, I’m a bit tepid to clearly define/determine/expound on what my view is on how best adult learners actually learn and what the process’/channels involved are. It is my desire to have this clarified more throughout the coursework.
5. **Beliefs about the Role of the Adult Educator** – There is no doubt in my mind that the role of the adult educator is one that lives the saying, “It is better to give than receive”. And while there are plenty of clichés embodying the saying “Teaching isn’t about the income – it is about the outcome”, this mindset carries over into my beliefs. My grandfather had a way of thinking such that if he had a tool/book/movie/etc that was just ‘sitting around’, he would much rather someone else have/use it that would put it to use and into action. That mindset has left indelible marks on my psyche that whatever I’ve been given is only useful if it, indeed, is being used/useful.

References:

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