Philosophical homogeneity in pre-service education: A longitudinal survey

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This investigation displays the findings of a 5 year longitudinal survey which uncovered a trend in data via a sample of 2600 pre-service education students. Each year 520 pre-service student teachers who were enrolled in a one-year full-time, after degree professional Bachelor of Education program in Ontario, Canada completed the survey. Beginning in the Fall of 2002 until the Fall of 2007 each of the students completed an educational philosophy survey to identify their philosophical orientation. Overwhelmingly, 90% or more pre-service students selected and identified with the statements emanating from the progressivist school. The majority (+90%) of pre-service student teachers who completed the survey strongly agreed with the statements underpinning progressivism. A small minority of less than 10% or 52 of the 520 surveyed indicated they were strongly aligned with other philosophical ideologies. These outcomes demonstrate a level of homogeneity that signifies agreement with the tenets of progressivism.

Introduction

This longitudinal survey covered a five year period from 2002 until 2007 and was a means to expose, identify and discuss pre-service teachers' educational philosophy. A progressivist trend was uncovered and it was this finding that informed and oriented pre-service teacher's debates and practice teaching each year as we examined the annual findings in classroom sessions.

This project details Canadian pre-service student's responses to a survey they completed during a prescribed one-year after degree program. The perspective herein emanates from this researcher who was the instructor within a curriculum methods course taken by a different group of pre-service students (sample) each year. Throughout the paper I detail the research project as it unfolded. To do this it was necessary to include the context of pre-service and the requirement for pre-service students to reflect on teaching while completing written tasks that were required elements within our Canadian one-year Bachelor of Education after degree program.

Various philosophical orientations are presented within the text and within Appendix B which provide an introductory view. The outcomes of this survey are then linked to these orientations which infused pre-service teachers during our one year program as they completed both practice teaching (practicum) and theory classes. Several rationales are presented to facilitate understanding and provide clarity.

Pre-service: A time of reflection and growth

Undergraduate pre-service teacher training is a time of concern, establishment, and the beginning of an occupational journey for students aiming to become teachers. Pre-service is admittedly a time of forced reflection due to in-class tasks and practicum (practice teaching) responsibilities yet these reflective tasks are necessary to begin the reflective process. Professors require reflective exercises because it is generally believed that, "understanding one's philosophical approach would foster evaluation of teaching decisions" (Pryor, Sloan & Amobi, 2007, p.3). As a professor I hope to connect the content of written reflections to their thoughts and actions that fuel practicum decision-making. The need to reflect on self in relation to society is a fundamental developmental outcome within teacher training. Becoming aware of and making sense of a philosophical stance is important. The ability to then relate teaching decisions to a stance in a pre-service program requires deep reflection upon self in relation to others as a means to self-monitor (Schoonmaker, 1998), grow and improve teaching action. Overall,

> the aim of reflecting on philosophical approaches is not to cement preservice teachers'
> orientations into pre-figured, categories that could minimize their efforts to make sense
> of the complexities of classroom life. Rather, the aim is for preservice teachers to draw
> upon prompts such as a metaphoric image or an analytic survey to facilitate a self-
> examination process. The goal of this self-examination was the creation of a coherent
> philosophic framework, which makes possible the navigation of classroom complexities
> (Pryor et al., 2007, p. 4)

Assembling a personal belief framework is a significant theoretical step in the pre-service year as it influences student teacher's identity and often leads to a constructivist approach with new understandings of self (Ryan, 2007). As professors the reflective task is an opportunity to address what has happened in practicum and peer into current stances. This is necessary because "if we are not equipped to talk about practice, we are not equipped to talk about theory. We must as far as possible address both theory and practice" (Beck, 1993, p. 2), in pre-service coursework.

From the onset of a teacher training program we must be aware that teacher knowledge "begins with what teachers already know and enact in their practices rather than beginning with knowledge that needs to be given to teachers" (Clandinin, 2007, p. 15). There is a need to look at the elements of knowledge that student-teachers carry into a School of Education. After all, "teacher knowledge refers to teacher' narrative knowledge, their personal practical knowledge, composed and recomposed over time and in the contexts of personal and professional knowledge landscapes" (Clandinin, 2007, p. 15). Practicum experiences of student-teachers may direct and inform their actions and reflections hence varied outcomes surface in their reflections and comments following pre-service teacher education experiences (classes/practicum). It is a process that is not entirely predictable or trouble-free.

As we observe student teachers in class and in teaching practicum we sense emotion and read the behaviour of pre-service students in action. We can then possibly link these

teacher behaviors to a philosophy, embedded beliefs, and values which become overt during teaching because teaching demands action, reflective thought and revision as success is pursued and growth appears in the fast paced reality of the classroom (Ryan, 2007).

Pre-service students within a faculty of education classroom and within the teaching practicum learn about the curricula and its surrounding curriculum via the actions of professors and in-service teachers who are important facilitators and models during teacher training. While in teaching practicum associate teachers observe and mentor pre-service student teachers via supportive discussions which transpire as necessary. It is through these spontaneous discussions that we learn about a student teacher's opinions, perspective and sense of self. Student teachers in turn describe these associate teachers in multihued terms and may even imitate their actions and general disposition since it is linked to a philosophical orientation of an associate (mentor) teacher. This relationship is profoundly interesting to a student teacher who will not only be evaluated by this associate in practicum they may decide to become like them as a teacher. These practicum impressions can fuel stories of teachers which abound in our society for instance, there have been several popular movies released about teachers such as, *Freedom Writers*, *The Dead Poets Society*, *The Emperors Club*, and *Mr. Holland's Opus*. In each movie, what is apparent is that these teachers have a philosophy which unfolds on screen and serves to inform and steer their teaching (Ryan, 2007).

Purpose

The purpose of this longitudinal trend survey was to identify pre-service students' philosophical orientation each year with the hope of discovering a trend within this five year period. Yearly, it was easy to label their beliefs in order to assign a philosophical identity that could be discussed, examined and reflected upon in Faculty of Education classroom sessions. Each year student teachers where reminded that identifying your philosophical orientation can lead to answers, understanding of events and general clarity within their teaching. The efforts herein facilitate identity formation, growth and the development of self-understanding. Again, each year one of our goals was to identify pre-service students' philosophy of education via our survey to expose trends and nurture self awareness. The following questions served as a guide each year:

1. What is the philosophical orientation of a pre-service education student?
2. What are the theoretical preferences of pre-service students with regard to teaching and learning?
3. Will pre-service teachers' philosophical orientations be similar or dissimilar each year?
4. Will a trend emerge?

Theoretical background

Intense and impassioned debate about educational (teaching/learning) beliefs may be uncertain and tentative in a Faculty of Education however; the discussions are the means

to expose student positions and foster deep reflection upon those beliefs. Often it is these debates that raise the pulse of participants and bring the theory to new levels of scrutiny. Debate is really the lifeblood of a Faculty of Education and without it theory is merely glossed over.

A first step towards this debate would be to require pre-service students to put on paper a teaching philosophy. This is critical to the development of new teachers in teacher training programs (Witcher, Sewall, Arnold, & Travers, 2001). The construction of a teaching philosophy is usually described as an indispensable task within a teacher training program that <u>does</u> affect the teaching-learning process as it contextualizes, and connects educational theory to praxis (Onwuegbuzie, Witcher, James, & Minor, 2002). The act of writing down beliefs makes these positions static and once made public these positions can cause student alignments under an umbrella term, theory or position. Many written beliefs when read aloud in class provoke students to respond. Debates may ensue as student-teachers make their positions known and object to elements noted in peer statements yet as McMullen and Alat (2002) remind us, "teacher preparation programs in general have a very poor record when it comes to influencing change in pre-service teachers' beliefs . . . . [and] students . . . tend to maintain the beliefs that they had when they entered " (p. 1). Does this imply that classroom exercises and discussion are merely acted out by student teachers and therefore Faculty of Education tasks may only be superficially worthwhile?

In fact one could suggest that this inquiry may have actually uncovered pre-service teachers' philosophical stances that were connected to beliefs participants fashioned in secondary and/or elementary school. Ultimately each teacher's conception of educational philosophy is and was informed by beliefs about human existence, educational product and process (Ozmon & Craver, 2008). These beliefs nourish student-teacher's positions as they may be called on to speak about issues relating to personal topics that skirt the curricula in teaching practicum. To not examine our philosophy of education would be a mistake since,

> The distinctions and conceptualizations we make in our thought are not just of theoretic
> interest; on the contrary, they have practical consequences, for our thought is inextricably
> related to our actions. If we misconceptualize a situation, or if we erect a false
> dichotomy, our practical efforts will bear the misshapen fruit. (Phillips, 1998, p. 410)

The need to examine self requires self-knowledge, skills and sensitivity. All teachers whether in-service or pre-service draw on their personal philosophy since philosophy infuses our "moral and social compass, behavioral, attitudinal, and value guide-posts, essential personal and professional prescriptions, and a consistent but alterable assessment means for professional evaluation" (Petress, 2003, p. 1). Indeed, an educator's philosophy impacts perceptions, beliefs, understanding and values to the point where all decisions can be traced back to their educational philosophy. Naturally, as is the case in most education fundamentals, educational philosophy is arranged into branches of philosophy which can be viewed and recognized as orientations to teaching and education.

Orientations: Philosophy within education

Our longitudinal survey was limited to six pillars often branded; Behaviourism, Essentialism, Perennialism, Progressivism, Existentialism, and Social reconstructionism (Appendix B). To thoroughly address each pillar exceeds the scope of this paper hence a cursory view is presented herein.

Behaviourism. It was introduced in the 1920s with core reflexive responses to stimuli and the positive classroom environment characterizing this mode were emphasized to produce desired behaviors in a classroom. People such as Ivan Pavlov, John Watson, B.F. Skinner, E.L. Thorndike, and Albert Bandura have contributed to this social learning mode. It is related to Aristotle's realism.

Essentialism is often described as a focus on core subjects, rather than student behaviors, and centres on basics, the three R's, of reading, writing and arithmetic. It is a teacher centred approach with detailed prescriptive structure, lecture, practice and drill in a 'practical' manner (Bagley, 1941). People such as William Bagley, Arthur Bestor, E. D. Hirsch, Diane Ravitch, and Theodore Sizer have contributed to this orientation. Training in rules of conduct is commonly linked to this realism orientation also noted in behaviourism.

Perrenialism is closely aligned with Essentialism yet Perrenialism emphasizes a liberal education to facilitate rationale thought, and European-American traditional values in a prescriptive curriculum (Hutchins, 1954). Jacque Maritain, Mortimer Adler, and Allan Bloom are linked to this stance which developed from Plato and Socrates who lectured and put forward weighty ideas to ponder.

Progressivism involves the whole student, their interests and abilities, and endeavours to produce independent thinkers within a democratic society. Progressivism is activity based and inclusive as all students are prepared to live and contribute to a democratic society (Dewey, 1916). The purpose of thought is action and truth is relative which is popular in contemporary society.

Social reconstructionism, an outgrowth of progressivism, demanded reform to instill noble ideals and erase social injustices (prejudice, discrimination) via multicultural exposure and community service in the 'real' world. Being politically active, working in society, and challenging the status quo was encouraged within this curriculum (Counts, 1934). Linked to Sartre and Kierkegaard the individual has responsibility for decisions and preferences in life.

Existentialism, which is not a quest for truth, rather it is a matter of choice as students choose what matters and construct there own curriculum via electives. Again, as with social reconstructionism existentialism is linked to Sartre and Kierkegaard as the individual has responsibility for decisions and preferences in life. Education is student-centred and teachers promote personal responsibility in a consequential environment (Neill, 1960).

In sum, our goal was to uncover the strength of connection to a particular orientation each year in order to identify student positions. Once identified students could use this orientation to efficiently and effectively debate and build their own belief statements in written tasks and while making contributions to education.

Sample

Each year from 2002 until 2007 a purposeful cross-sectional sample (N=520) was selected due to accessibility and convenience. All participants were students who attended University classes in classroom management that this researcher instructed. Participants were limited to pre-service students who were enrolled in the Bachelor of Education (BEd) program, a one-year full-time professional program that meets the requirements of the Ontario College of Teachers for teacher certification (Certificate of Qualification). No external exam is required following graduation.

All participants had an approved undergraduate degree from an accredited university before enrollment. Participants were enrolled in one of two divisions in the Bachelor of Education program. Each year the sample included 320 pre-service teachers who were training to become J/I (Junior/Intermediate - Grades 4 to 10) teachers and 200 pre-service students in the I/S (Intermediate/Senior - Grades 7 to 12) levels.

Over five years 2600 students completed the survey during their October classes while completing courses in curriculum studies, curriculum methods, and foundations in education. In addition, each year there were three practice teaching sessions for a total of 13 weeks of placement in elementary and secondary schools throughout the province of Ontario, Canada. Throughout the five year window age ranged from 22 to 57 and there were 1659 females and 941 males respectively.

Research design

Since, the intent of this research was to facilitate the discovery, understanding and identification of educational philosophy, a survey (Appendix A - Sadker & Sadker, 1997) was adapted and piloted during the 2002-2003 academic year during September of the Faculty of education year. During this time, each of the 48 survey items was edited to ensure comprehension, accessibility, and ethical soundness. Changes were made to several survey prompts to enhance face validity, and each item was reviewed by a team of Professors within our Faculty of Education. Closed-ended statements were developed which required the respondent to indicate the extent of agreement on a scale that ranged from strongly agree (SA / 5), Agree (A / 4), Neutral (N / 3) to disagree (D / 2), strongly disagree (SD / 1). Each statement was linked to one of the six educational philosophies. Reaction to a statement could be added to a total with the higher score indicating more agreement with philosophy that represented that viewpoint. The highest possible score in any one area was 40, and the lowest possible score was 8. Scores in the mid to high 30s indicate strong agreement, and scores below 20 indicate disagreement with the tenets of a particular philosophy.

The following month (2002-2003), a refined survey tool allowed each participant to write the number of his or her response in a blank space (see below). Next, they added the numbers in each column to illuminate their stance concerning statements that were linked to identify educational philosophies (see Appendix A).

Scores, in columns A through F respectively, were then examined to determine the extent of agreement or disagreement with the beliefs of six major educational philosophies. Participants were asked to compare each of the six scores and highlight the highest and lowest. Results were presented in each class and a philosophical label could be used to identify that person's educational philosophy. Discussions were held recursively in each class which addressed how an educational philosophy can influence teaching. This survey (Appendix A) was completed after each student had experienced a teaching practicum and several educational theory classes.

Results

Preliminary analysis of each completed survey was first completed as part of the University class/section this researcher instructed. Participants were instructed to complete the survey and calculate totals. Each student then posted these results on a whiteboard at the front of the class. In each class/section nearly all participants claimed to be a progressivist as his or her highest total score indicated.

Since 2002-2003 the outcomes remained in the 90% range for progressivism. Specifically, 2600 students responded in this manner.

- 2002-03 (90%), 468 out of 520 pre-service student teachers
- 2003-04 (96%), or 499 out of 520 pre-service student teachers
- 2004-05 (92%), or 478 out of 520 pre-service student teachers
- 2005-06 (91%), or 473 out of 520 pre-service student teachers
- 2006-2007 (95%), or 494 out of 520 pre-service student teachers.

In some cases, the scores were close to another category yet their highest score was always noted. Each year a very small percentage scored higher in another area, for instance,

- 2002-03 (4%), 20 out of 520 pre-service student teachers indicated they were behaviourists and only 3% or 15 teachers indicated they were Social Reconstructionists (an outgrowth of progressivism), and 3% or 15 indicated that they strongly agreed with the Existentialist statements.
- 2003-04 (3%), or 15 out of 520 pre-service student teachers indicated they were Social Reconstructionists (an outgrowth of progressivism) and only 1% (5) indicated that they strongly agreed with the Existentialist statements.
- 2004-05 (4%), or 20 out of 520 pre-service student teachers indicated they were behaviourists and only 3% or 15 teachers indicated they were Social Reconstructionists (an outgrowth of progressivism) while another 1% (5) indicated they were Perrenialists.

- 2005-06 (6%), or 31 out of 520 pre-service student teachers indicated they were behaviourists and only 3% or 15 teachers indicated they were Social Reconstructionists (an outgrowth of progressivism),
- 2006-2007 (3%), or 15 out of 520 pre-service student teachers indicated they were Social Reconstructionists (an outgrowth of progressivism) and only 2% (10) indicated that they strongly agreed with the Existentialist statements.

Discussion

Being aware of a philosophy of education informs and provides an identity for pre-service teachers who are beginning their careers. Becoming aware of the six pillars of educational philosophy further informs, guides and offers a means of labeling and understanding the decisions a teacher makes and we are reminded that,

> A philosophy of education addresses why we educate so that we make better choices about who, where, when and how we educate. A philosophical view of education involves asking questions about the role of education in a society and seeking answers to these questions. (Harris, Cavanagh, Giddings, & Reynolds, 2004, p. 7)

Not being able to declare your philosophical orientation could cause some to feel less informed or inadequately prepared to enter into a debate with others who may be using these terms in conversation. Also, a lack of philosophical identity (progressivist/ behaviourist) and knowledge of self in the classroom can impact teachers as uncertainty and confusion can quickly grow. Conversely, having an educational philosophy,

> provides a sense of identity and strengthens the convictions that form a foundation for professional vision. Although it is important for teachers working together to have a common understanding of the reasons for their instructional practise, in reality, teachers display a variety of philosophical orientations. (Harris, et al., 2004, p.)

Looking away from educational philosophy (belief statements) can only increase the probability of tacit knowledge that is unnamed and unaccessible. All educators need to ask who they are as a professional, what do they believe in, and how do their beliefs impact their teaching in this educational journey (Crews & Glasscott, 1998, p. 234). Consequently, revealing a pre-service educators' educational philosophy is essential since it prompts reflection, discussion, and can lead to the revision of educational actions.

One of our tasks was to identify philosophical orientation for each student and connect these orientations to pre-service teacher's actions within practice which, in our study, was a yearly and somewhat easier task since so many participants strongly agreed with the progressivist statements. We concluded in class discussions that this model is just as strong and appealing as it once was. It is not a point of concern; it is a point of interest, since we could now label and relate actions and observations in practice teaching sessions

to a particular philosophy which provided a label and body of knowledge that served to inform and clarify their current educational stance.

For example, participants responded and answered strongly agree with most, if not all of the following statements (3, 9, 15, 21, 27, 33, 39, and 45). More specifically, participants strongly agreed that, (3) students learn best by engaging in real-world activities rather than reading. This statement was drawn from the tenant of experiential learning which is an important mechanism of both democracy and the Progressive Education Association. Next, participants strongly agreed that (9) Schools should prepare students for analyzing and solving the types of problems they will face outside the classroom. This aspect of the progressive curriculum seeks to instill in each student concern for, and a role in society.

Participants also indicated in item (15) that, curriculum within a school should be built around personal experiences and the needs of the students and, (21) Art classes should focus primarily on individual expression and creativity. Moreover, participants belive that, (27) Since students learn effectively through social interaction, schools should plan for extensive social interaction in their curricula.

Our yearly survey helped me to discover that pre-service educators believe (33) schools must place more emphasis on teaching about the concerns of minorities and women. Schools and, (39) students should be active participants in the learning process. And lastly, (45) Teachers must stress for students the relevance of what they are learning to their lives outside, as well as inside, the classroom. These beliefs were now public and could be discussed, debated and further refined by the conversations and analysis.

Outcomes: A rationale

The outcomes of this investigation led to supplementary questions which are explored henceforth. For instance, we asked the following questions.

1. Why did these students so strongly believe and embrace the progressive orientation?
2. What are the implications for progressivism in our schools and our pre-service programs?
3. What are the next steps for these pre-service students in practice and for me as a researcher?

In response to the first supplementary question I reflected upon our pre-service program and located within our own philosophical framework an expectation for our students within the program which stated that "it is anticipated that the pre-service interaction of theory, practice, context, and self-knowledge will serve as entry points to the profession of teaching" (Nipissing University, 2006-2007, p.2). Our framework included six interconnected points.

1. An interdisciplinary program focused on the development of professional understandings.

2. The integration of professional understandings through performance.
3. An understanding of the diversity of our society and communities and the concomitant attitudes, knowledge, and skills necessary to create effective learning environments.
4. An understanding of self as developing professional teacher.
5. The development of critical reflective practice through guided introspective analysis of emerging professional/practical attitudes, knowledge and skill.
6. The development of technological knowledge, skills and values to support effective practice (Nipissing University, 2006-2007, p. 2-3).

These conceptual essentials detailed how staff should teach and it seems the resultant program, which could be labeled constructivist, was actually "grounded in the philosophy of Dewey and the theories of Piaget (1950) and Vygotsky (1978), [since] constructivisim is based on the premise that students learn best when they are able to construct their knowledge, often from hands-on interactions" (Henniger, 2004, p. 258). In fact my teaching activities complement these structures and as I further reflected upon my specific class discussions, lesson plans, assignments, activities, and notes developed during classes I noted my 'progressive' predisposition. I recalled student feedback related to our classroom activities which were very much concrete, hands on activities in which pre-service students interact with one-another and work together on meaningful tasks that were often authentic case studies drawn from the school in which they taught. Our classes were activity based and I assumed the position of facilitator in discussions and tasks. I wondered: Could it be that I have influenced the students or where the students already progressivist from the onset of the Faculty of Education program?

The 2600 surveyed pre-service teachers were choosing *one-way of being* (progressivist) hence this could be viewed as a point of tension as our program philosophy suggests *there is no one way of being a teacher* and herein lies the plausible next steps for this research. The survey needs to be continued in practice to see if there are changes in philosophical orientation within the teaching journey and each year I need to survey in-service teachers to monitor the philosophical orientations in order to address the third supplementary question.

A second supplementary question surfaced as a concern for the future of the Faculty of Education program and the programming in all schools that our pre-service students find employment within. Specifically, what are the implications for progressivism in our schools and our pre-service programs?

Even though progressivism has a deep history as a philosophical orientation growing out of the pragmatists of Europe (Ozmon & Craver, 2008), it is in its formative years compared to other educational philosophies. Within this study progressivism has been embraced by most of the pre-service students and is a reality for many Faculty of Education programs who seek to survive and thrive in the 21st century I believe. Indeed, "progressisivism views nature as being in flux, as ever changing and therefore, knowledge must continually be redefined and rediscovered to keep up with that change" (Ryan & Cooper, 2004, p. 281). The suggestion, for our schools and our pre-service programs, is to confront change and respond accordingly. "Spending year in and year out performing the same role is inherently deadening. Twenty years of experience doing the same thing is only

one year of experience twenty times over" (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1991, p.11). Hence, there is a need to change roles and amend current curricula and instruction to keep up with the demands of society. In other words, we will need to continue to do what we have been doing in education and that is to revise periodically to keep pace, change and grow.

Keeping up with society can mean for instance, keeping up with the technological revolution and information highway which has caused our Faculty to become a lap-top program and students are confronted with new and current issues such as cyber-bullying in schools. In response, we embrace the issues, discuss the possibilities in our Faculty classes and staff meetings, and it is this change that is necessary to meet the needs of pre-service students who are creating new lived experiences in classrooms.

> Progressive educators believe that the place to begin is with the student rather
> than the subject matter. The teacher identifies what the student's interests and
> concerns are and tries to shape problems around them. The student's motivation
> to solve the problem is the key and posing problems based on student interests
> helps heighten their motivation. (Ryan & Cooper, 2004, p. 281)

Overall, it was Dewey's concern for social functioning within a society that remains appealing today possibly due to the daily dysfunction that reaches us via the media coverage of education and schooling. Pre-service teachers often find fault within the educational system they are plunged into each practicum suggesting it is wanting and that they intend to make it better.

Conclusion

A teacher's educational philosophy "constitutes a moral and social compass, behavioral, attitudinal, and value guide-posts, essential personal and professional prescriptions, and a consistent but alterable assessment means for professional evaluation" (Petress, 2003, p. 1). As educators, we can anticipate questions from our students concerning our beliefs, as students ask us not only what we believe, but also where did these beliefs come from, and what supports our beliefs. The writing and stance of Dewey appeals to participants in this research effort and informs both our theory and our praxes (practice). After all, it was Dewey that suggested, "meanings and purposes of education must be actively constructed by individual persons" (Dewey, 1916, p. 96). The option of being an active student while developing knowledge, skills and attitudes is attractive to both the participant and the observer/teacher. Teaching in this manner instills a feeling of pride and ownership and a sense of commitment to our own philosophy that underpins and defines our understanding of good teaching.

This five year longitudinal survey was part of an effort to facilitate discussion and encourage debate each year among Faculty of Education pre-service teachers. I wanted to influence students and assist in the development of pre-service student teachers' beliefs via the alteration of basic thinking, which has merit within any teacher training program (Webster, 2004).

In fact, it was this perspective that motivated this inquiry in an effort to discover and label pre-service teachers' philosophical orientation. The developmental mode of teacher education is often a process of self-analysis and discovery. The requirement to clearly formulate and express ones educational philosophy seems understandable and necessary in order to construct sturdy internal and external stances that can withstand questioning. Knowing yourself better can improve self-analysis and an educational philosophy grounds us, as we can stand tall in turbulent times amidst debate and criticism.

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Appendix A

Philosophy of education

What do you accept as true in teaching and education?
Facts: Every one of us has a philosophy of teaching and education.
This philosophy is a position which emerges when we discuss issues related to our deep-seated beliefs concerning the operation of schools.

Instructions

Read and respond to each statement that follows.
Decide on your position by assigning a number to communicate your reaction.

(5= Agree strongly) (4= Agree) (3= Neutral) (2= Disagree) (1= Disagree Strongly)

_____ 1.   The curriculum should be subject centered. Student learning should be centred on basic subjects such as reading, writing, history, math, and science.
_____ 2.   The curriculum should focus on the great thinkers of the past.
_____ 3.   Students learn best by engaging in real-world activities rather than reading.
_____ 4.   Students should be permitted to determine their own curriculum.
_____ 5.   Material is taught effectively when it is broken down into small parts.
_____ 6.   The curriculum should place multidisciplinary analysis and action regarding social problems and themes from social life at the heart of students school experience.
_____ 7.   The curriculum of a school should be determined by information that is essential for all students to know.
_____ 8.   Schools, above all, should develop students' abilities to think deeply, analytically, and creatively; this is more important than developing their social skills or providing them with a useful body of knowledge about our ever-changing world.
_____ 9.   Schools should prepare students for analyzing and solving the types of problems they will face outside the classroom.
_____10.   Reality is determined by each individual's perceptions. There is no objective and universal reality.
_____11.   People are shaped much more by their environment than by their genetic dispositions or the exercise of their free will.
_____12.   Schools should engage students in the analysis of major institutions and social issues so that social problems, causes, and ways to respond could be identified.
_____13.   Students should not be promoted from one grade to the next until they have read and mastered certain key material.
_____14.   An effective education is not aimed at the immediate needs of the students or society.
_____15.   The curriculum of a school should be built around the personal experiences and needs of the students.

_____16. Students who do not want to study much should not be required to do so.

_____17. Programmed learning is an effective method of teaching information.

_____18. School curriculum should emphasize the common good over that of the individual.

_____19. Academic rigor is an essential component of education.

_____20. All students, regardless of ability, should study more or less the same curriculum.

_____21. Art classes should focus primarily on individual expression and creativity.

_____22. Effective learning is unstructured and informal.

_____23. Students learn best through reinforcement.

_____24. Students learn more outside the classroom than in.

_____25. Effective schools assign a substantial amount of homework.

_____26. Education should focus on the discussion of questions such as "What is beauty?" or "What is truth?"

_____27. Since students learn effectively through social interaction, schools should plan for substantial social interaction in their curricula.

_____28. The purpose of school is to help students understand and find the meaning of their existence.

_____29. Frequent objective testing is the best way to determine what students know.

_____30. Students need to have experiences which develop their desire and capacity to respond to social needs.

_____31. Canada must become more competitive economically with countries such as Japan, and schools have an affirmative obligation to bolster their academic requirements in order to facilitate such competition.

_____32. Students must be taught to appreciate learning primarily for its own sake, rather than because it will help them in their careers.

_____33. Schools must place more emphasis on teaching about the concerns of minorities and women.

_____34. Each person has free will to develop as he or she sees fit.

_____35. Reward students well for learning and they will remember and be able to apply what they learned, even if they were not led to understand why the information is worth knowing.

_____36. A project-based curriculum based on social needs is necessary training to participate in a democracy.

_____37. Canadian schools should attempt to instill traditional Canadian values in students.

_____38. Teacher-guided discovery of profound truths is a key method of teaching students.

_____39. Students should be active participants in the learning process.

_____40. There are no external standards of beauty. Beauty is what an individual decides it to be.

_____41. We can place a lot of faith in our schools and teachers to determine which student behaviors are acceptable and which are not.

_____42. Curriculum must encourage participation, critical analysis, and action.

_____43. Schools must provide students with a firm grasp of basic facts regarding the books, people, and events that have shaped Canadian heritage.

_____44.   Philosophy is ultimately at least as practical a subject to study as is computer science.

_____45.   Teachers must stress for students the relevance of what they are learning to their lives outside, as well as inside, the classroom.

_____46.   It is more important for a student to develop a positive self-concept than to learn specific subject matter.

_____47.   Learning is more effective when students are given frequent tests to determine what they have learned.

_____48.   The overall education experience should minimize the importance of individual student achievement.

Now that you have responded to all 48 items, write the number of your response to each statement in the spaces below. Add the numbers in each column to determine your attitudes toward key educational philosophies.

A Essentialism	B Perennialism	C Progressivism	D Existentialism	E Social reconstruct-ionism	F Behaviourism
1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.
7.	8.	9.	10.	11.	12.
13.	14.	15.	16.	17.	18.
19.	20.	21.	22.	23.	24.
25.	26.	27.	28.	29.	30.
31.	32.	33.	34.	35.	36.
37.	38.	39.	40.	41.	42.
43.	44.	45.	46.	47.	48.

These scores, in columns A through F represent how much you agree or disagree with the beliefs of six major educational philosophies:Essentialism, perennialism, progressivism, existentialism, social reconstructionism, and behaviourism.

The higher your score, the more you agree with philosophers who represent that viewpoint. The highest possible score in any one area is 40, and the lowest possible score is 8.

Compare your six scores. What is your highest? What is your lowest?

                                                        (Ryan, 2007, p. 46-50)

Appendix B

Philosophical orientation	Key elements	Instructional mode	Origins/ proponents
1. Perrenialism	Teacher will put forward ideas that are eternal and aim to uncover enduring truths which are constant, unchanging, through grand literature, art, philosophy, religion.	The teacher will hope to enable students to handle large ideas via lectures and class discussion. Debates are nurtured and key to development	Robert Hutchins, Jacque Maritain, Mortimer Adler, Allan Bloom
2. Essentialism	Teach the common core, "the basics" of information and skills (cultural heritage) needed for citizenship. (Curriculum evolves slowly)	Individual as entity within social context. Individual responsibility for decisions and preferences - tasks	William Bagley; Arthur Bestor, E. D. Hirsch, Chester Finn, Diane Ravitch, Theodore Sizer
3. Progressivism	Ideas should be tested by active experiments. Learning was rooted in questions of learners via interaction with others. The experiences are student centered.	Problem solving and a project approach with group and individual tasks emphasizing social skills development.	John Dewey, William Kilpatrick
4. Social reconstructionism	Critical pedagogy via the analysis of world events, controversial issues and diversity to provide vision for better world and social change.	Individual as entity within social context therefore group work and accountability key for each participant	George Counts, J. Habermas, Ivan Illich, Henry Giroux, Paulo Freire
5. Behaviourism	Behavior shaped by design and determined by forces in mileau. Learning occurs as result of reinforcing responses to stimuli. Social learning is aided by observing and imitating others.	Learning by observing and imitating others. Use of external rewards and punishment leads to systematic and conditioning in classes.	Ivan Pavlov, John Watson, B.F. Skinner, E.L. Thorndike, Albert Bandura
6. Existentialism	Reality is subjective within the individual. Individual rather than external standards. Foci: Freedom	Individual as an entity within social context and an individual is responsible for decisions and preferences	Sartre, Kierkegaard