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Pedagogy and the Classroom

In the first few weeks of taking ENG 290: The English Language, multiple concepts have stuck out to me regarding ideas of pedagogy and how to encourage others to take initiative in their education journey. Our curriculum within the class has clear connections between each of the readings, and I've made note of the two biggest parallels within our class readings. Both connections revolve around self-initiative and self-efficacy.

The first major connection I've seen in our class readings this semester is the idea that pedagogy is meant to empower students and honor their own creativity and engagement in their own learning. Traci Gardner's "The Essentials of an Effective Writing Assignment" highlights the importance of self-initiative in students' learning journeys. When students are given the chance to choose their own analyses and observations, their writing performance is found to be stronger and more engaged. By allowing room for the students to work with what interests them, they are more likely to be committed to their work and to focus on the areas that they are confident in. This sentiment is also reflected in Jennifer Gonzalez's article "Moving from Feedback to Feedforward", her process of grading and providing feedback focuses on empowering her students to take their knowledge to a higher level. This form of feedback seeks to "regenerate talent...[and] expand possibilities" (Gonzalez) within the student, rather than provide them with a 'good' or 'bad' grade. The educator can push their students out of their comfort zone by focusing on their already developed skills. Any way that you can positively reinforce a student to work harder and to dive deeper into their writing should be seen as a beneficial teaching skill.

An important part of this work is focusing on process-based learning rather than product-based learning. When we focus on revisions and student-initiated learning and not on ‘getting a good grade’, students are more likely to thrive in their classroom environment. Therefore, educators should try to guide their students through their assignments rather than leaving their students to teach themselves. This allows students to check in with their teacher, and to be able to narrow their focus on intellectual development. Through learning about the different forms of pedagogy and the way it has developed over time, the modern shift to pedagogy has embraced this sentiment of process-based learning.

Another connection I’ve seen in our class readings is the idea that pedagogy requires a sense of calm and understanding within the educator in order to create the best environment for students. Bell Hooks states that “teachers must be actively committed to a process of self-actualization that promotes their own wellbeing if they are to teach in a manner that empowers students” (Hooks 15). A teacher must be aware of their role as a human being just as much as they need to be aware of the humanity of their students. If they are not confident within their skills as a teacher, it is easy for the educator to become discouraged and become preoccupied with their own anxieties about the nature of their teaching skills. This can be applied to multiple different ‘educator’ roles that someone might take in their life: as a sibling, as a parent, or in executive leadership.

This recognition of the humanity of everyone in the classroom can be seen in the approaches to grading and providing feedback to students when they submit assignments. Kristy Loudon’s Cult of Pedagogy blog also reflects on this sentiment when it comes to grading and providing feedback for students. When a teacher becomes disheartened by a lack of motivation within their students, it can be easy to give up the pursuit for students to be actively engaged. But

a teacher must be devoted to the advancement of knowledge in their students, and seek to find ways that allow students to be actively concerned in their own learning journey, not to be searching for the sole satisfaction of their educator. If the teacher has found the calm within themselves, they are more readily equipped to concern themselves with the thriving of their students.

Overall, the readings I have learned throughout these first few weeks have reinforced the importance of self-efficacy and empowerment within education and pedagogy. If the student and the teacher feel that they are unworthy or lack potential, their effort and skill levels will begin to decrease. This works in other places in life where a person has to take on a teaching role; not every learning opportunity appears within a classroom setting. Therefore, there needs to be a focus on the well-being and self-image within teaching spaces, and a goal to empower learners with the idea that their work and efforts are valuable and that they have the ability to accomplish their goals.

Works Cited

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