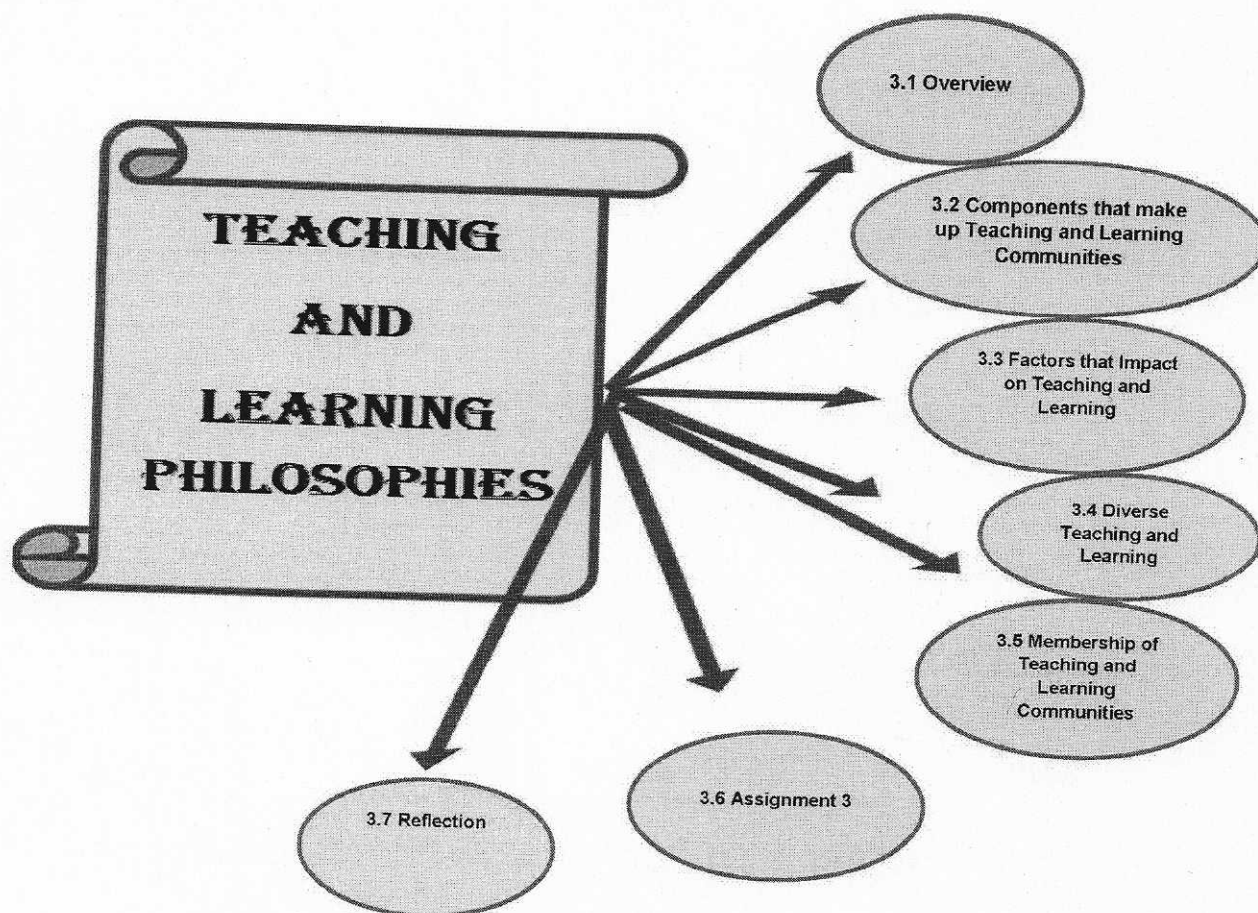


3.1 OVERVIEW

In Unit 2, we explored various concepts relating to professional teachers and discussed the attributes and challenges teachers face in the classroom. In this unit, we look at the different teaching philosophies and understand how this impacts on our teaching. In your exploration of this journey, you will then learn to understand the components that make up the learning community in which teachers work. You will also learn to understand how community life impacts on the teacher and learning of a child. This journey will help you understand the impact of membership of a learning community, developing your own teaching and learning philosophy from multiple perspectives.

THE STRUCTURE OF LESSON 3



[Open Rubric](#)

Before you learn more about the philosophies of teaching and learning, it is important to understand what makes up the teaching and learning community.

3.2 COMPONENTS THAT MAKE UP THE TEACHING AND LEARNING COMMUNITY

No member of the learning community should work in isolation and be separated from the larger context. You will recall the seven roles we discussed in the previous unit. Not all teachers are equally strong in each of these roles but working together, we can perform each role equally well. All members of the learning community should function and work as a collective, share and exchange knowledge and wisdom about their profession. These members of the community must always be aware of the larger context, within which the group operates. For members of the learning community to function effectively, they need to engage with each other and discuss how the broader organisation of which they are a part really function, how they function and their composition as well.

As the members of this community have been trained, continue to develop and acquire skills and are required to perform their work, they are regarded as a professional learning community (PLC). Although there are many definitions provided, DuFour, DuFour, Eaker and Marzano (2006) stress that PLCs are educators committed to working together using processes of inquiry, problem-solving and reflection upon their practice. The crucial element to a teaching and learning community is to work together and continue learning.

In the teaching and learning environment called a school, the principal and the school leadership team play a crucial role. They are expected to provide leadership, manage the school efficiently, and guide and support the teaching and learning community in many areas of the work they do. They also need to promote positive working relationships between staff members and encourage them to learn and develop together for the benefit of their learners.

It is not only the responsibility of the head of the school and their team to provide leadership but also members of the teaching staff must be encouraged to work together. They need to interact with each other, share ideas about their classroom practice as well as the work they do with learners. In addition, they must plan the year schedule as a team of professional learners. They may, for example, plan to design and develop the grade and/or phase curriculum as a team, thus creating a coherent programme or a curriculum for the school. This collaboration component is necessary to build collegiality through learning from each other and contributing to the improvement of the school.

The ongoing assessment of learners, the curriculum and other initiatives in the school play a significant role in the teaching and learning understanding. Ongoing formative evaluation is important for learning and improvement. When sharing on the performance of learners, for example, the PLC should focus on the positive performance and encourage those experiencing challenges to ask for advice and learn from their colleagues. The school leadership should provide help and support those members of staff in this initiative.

LEARNING ACTIVITY 3.1 - NOT FOR SUBMISSION

In order to understand the context and background of your learners, as teachers, you need to explore the components that make your teaching and learning effective. In your exploration, you first need to do the following:

STAGE 1: Pre-Reading

1. Spend 5 minutes brainstorming what you think are the different components that make up the teaching and learning community.
2. Secondly, think about the different roles and responsibilities of each component. Write some notes you will need to use later.
3. On the basis of your brainstorm, formulate some questions that you hope the Readings below will help to answer.

STAGE 2: Reading Stage

1. Click on the links below and read through the documents to help you understand more about the components of the community of teaching and learning.
2. If the document does not open, go to the additional resources and find the related documents for reading. Highlight important points, make notes and keep for later use when working on your assignment
 - Components of Teaching and Learning: <https://www.k12blueprint.com/sites/default/files/Components-of-a-Successful-PLC.pdf>
 - Teacher and Teaching: <http://www.cde.org.za/wpcontent/uploads/2014/10/Teachers%20teaching%20and%20learner%20performance%20in%20mathematics.pdf>

STAGE 3: Post Reading

- 3.1 Organize what you have learned in the readings in the form of a mind map or table and write one (1) or two (2) statements about the readings. Keep your notes to help you form the basis of your discussion and/or assignment. Remember to provide complete references for any direct quotations.

The picture below is meant to help you to search for more ideas about learning communities collaborating, sharing ideas and learning from each other.
<http://www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/education-building-blocks/teacher-education/quality-teacher-training-in-africa/>

K-12 BLUEPRINT

A planning resource for personalizing learning

Components of a Successful PLC

toolkits

A professional learning community (PLC) is a delicate recipe of ingredients that never cooks the same way twice.

A professional learning community (PLC) is a delicate recipe of ingredients that never cooks the same way twice. What makes a true PLC is how educators respond to the specific needs of their particular school. An idea or tactic embraced by one school may not work for staff at another school.

The PLC concept is often misconstrued as simply holding more staff meetings. But it's much more than that. It's a process that's focused on three major components: learning, collaboration, and results.

First Component

The first component of learning versus merely teaching is crucial, especially for school principals. With a PLC, principals continue to observe instruction and discuss vital issues, such as instructional data and student efficacy. But the focus is on the results instead of on instruction. Year-end test results will never be a surprise if principals spend less time reviewing what teachers plan to do and more time on what they actually do.

A PLC should be an environment in which the faculty learns from each other and works together as a unit. The staff studies a topic together and determines collectively how to apply their new learning. At all levels of the school organization, professionals in the school work collaboratively and continually to learn together and apply their learning for the benefit of all students. Teachers also collectively attend conferences and professional meetings as part of staff development.

With the encouragement of the principal, teachers use their own newly acquired knowledge to develop additional units of study for students. In subsequent meeting sessions, the staff shares and compares notes, working in tandem with each other to provide a coherent program, coordinated at all grade levels. The resulting development of a high-quality curriculum and the development of the school as a learning community of professionals can be attributed in large measure to the school's administrative leadership.

Second Component

Collaboration is the second component of a PLC. Staff members must learn from one another and attend outside professional-development offerings, assuming that no one staff member is smarter than the collective staff. A PLC meeting is more than teachers getting together to share data. It is a group of individuals who meet to achieve common goals for their grade level and for the school. Building and maintaining a collaborative culture is one of the most difficult aspects of a PLC. Yet the school-wide collaboration that comes with it is truly magical, with staff becoming champions of the school's mission. Sharing their classroom practice provides the opportunity for members to give and receive feedback, contributing to their learning and development.

Decision-making structures and meetings are primary means of communication. The minutes of each formalized meeting should be printed and distributed to all teachers. Therefore, even if teachers do not attend a particular meeting, they have access to what happened there. In addition, the principal should make announcements each morning over the public-address system, some intended for teachers and others for students. The administrators can also communicate through notes put into teachers' boxes.

Teachers visit each other's classrooms to learn from each other and to provide useful feedback. Such open and trusting practice contributes to individual and community improvement. In an environment of this kind, teachers can share both their successes and their failures and may be more comfortable in debate, disagreement, and discussion.

When implementing a new curriculum, collaboration among the faculty increases dramatically for several reasons. First, if no one is familiar with the curriculum, everyone needs to learn and master the new material. Second, if the curriculum is organized sequentially, teachers must link their work with what is being taught at other grade levels. Third, teachers must work together on the design of instructional units.

The principal can help develop various structures designed to enable faculty to share, such as optional monthly "concern" meetings that provide opportunities for open discussions of issues or concern to the teachers. Decision-making bodies that meet on a regular basis should also be established, as well as activities that foster cooperation and collaboration among the faculty.

Shared decision-making begins at the campus level and is instituted by the instructional leadership team, and can spread through the training of staff from across the district in the knowledge and skills deemed necessary for serving on such a team in each school.

Third Component

This dedication to results is the final component of a successful PLC. Instead of merely sharing data, educators and administrators actively respond to data. This requires ongoing assessment of programs and initiatives in the school, and common formative assessments are vital. Teachers meet weekly to share status reports of their common assessments. During these sharing sessions, the focus is not necessarily on the teacher whose performance indicators are low but on creating an atmosphere where the success of others can be shared and replicated. Principals in PLC schools have the courage to deal with hard numbers regarding student performance and respond to this data.

A ladder of decision making can be used as a means for determining the focus of staff development for the school year. Grade-level meetings and priorities can be determined. Subsequently, the entire faculty can convene to discuss and decide on the staff development program, with the staff's voice carried "upward" on the ladder by the established system. The process culminates in a school-wide meeting to make the final decision.

In a PLC, principals encourage collective learning, making it clear that expectations are high. Such learning is enabled through arranging time, schedules, and structures to accommodate it. He or she manages and effectively utilizes resources, and monitors and encourages efforts. The principal maximizes the resources brought by grants, large and small, for the benefit of the students. Furthermore, he or she gives teachers the freedom and responsibility to make decisions.

A school's vision evolves from the values of the staff. This vision is used as a guidepost in making decisions about teaching and learning in the school—a vision that focuses on children and children's success. The school staff joins together as a professional community of learners, engaging in reflection, assessment, study, and learning.

Seven Habits of Highly Effective Professional Learning Communities

1. In a school where the staff operates as a PLC, the aspirations of the teachers, needs of the students, and goals of the school are realized.
2. There must be some factor or purpose around which the staff rallies its interest and energy to join in community, and that factor must ultimately benefit students.
3. The factors that make it possible for students to grow and develop are the same factors that enable professional staff to grow and develop.
4. A climate of democratic participation by all constituents in the school (administrators, teachers, other staff, students, and parents) generates energy and enthusiasm to reach goals.
5. In addition to a focus on goals and productivity, the community of professionals in the school demonstrates care and concern about the students and each other.
6. Organizational learning, in contrast to individual learning, is richer and provides focus for the members of the PLC.
7. The school's administration must provide the schedules and structures for initiating and maintaining organizational learning and its application by the professionals in the school.

3.3 FACTORS THAT IMPACT ON THE TEACHING AND LEARNING IN SCHOOL COMMUNITIES

Many schools in South Africa, both urban and rural schools, are beset by a whole host of challenges and dilemmas. On many occasions, you will be called upon and requested to help solve societal problems. At the same time, you have to deal with your own issues. You also need to cope with the constant changes in your professional environment. This may pose a huge challenge to you and the community of your profession. In essence, you have a responsibility to deal with the various issues that may have an impact on you, the school community and learners in particular. As you look at the pictures below, you are forced to ask yourself a number of questions. Teachers and school managers are forced to deal with a variety of challenges on a daily basis. As a teacher, you will have to learn to address the complex issues and the dilemmas you will be experiencing daily.



LEARNING ACTIVITY 3.2 - NOT FOR SUBMISSION

LEARNING ACTIVITY 3.2 - NOT FOR SUBMISSION

Before you get on with your readings, you first need to do the activity below. This activity is divided into three stages:

STAGE 1: Pre-Reading

1. Spend 5 minutes brainstorming what you think are the factors that impact on teaching and learning in your community. Secondly, think about what you might want to do to help your community of professionals to resolve the challenges they might encounter in their teaching career. Write some notes you will need to use later.
2. Based on your brainstorm, formulate some questions that you hope the video below will help to answer.

STAGE 2: Watching the Video Stage

1. Click on the links given below and watch the videos to help you understand more about the issues that impacts on teaching and learning.

Lack of sleep: <http://www.bbc.com/news/business-22209818>

Socio-economic status: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tmkXE2CK-rM>

Poverty: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UslZmqLSJwE>

← video
links

1. If the given link does not open, highlight the link and paste it in a search engine like Google to open. Write important points while watching the video and keep for later use when working on your assignment.

STAGE 3: Post Reading

- 3.1 Organize what you have learned from the pictures and the video in the form of a mind map or table and write five (5) statements about the factors that affect teaching and learning. Keep your notes to help you form the basis of your assignment. Remember to provide complete references for any direct quotations.

3.4 DIVERSE TEACHING AND LEARNING PHILOSOPHIES

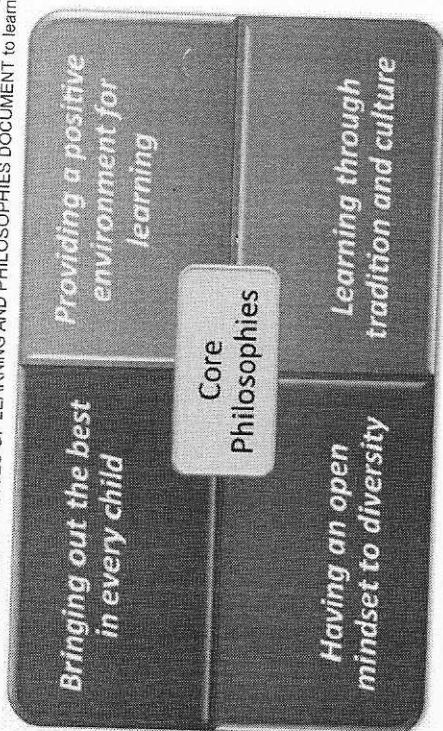
A variety of educational philosophies have developed over the years. These are beliefs or point of views helping us to understand and develop best ways in which we should facilitate learning. You need to understand that our focus is on teaching and learning in order to accommodate all learners in the classroom. Some of these philosophies are teacher-centered and some are student-centered. But, they all have the same goal, which is to provide learners with the best education possible.

It is important to understand where we come from and where we are going. As you are on your way to become a professional teacher, you will be required to ensure that the learners you teach do actually learn and benefit. For example, teaching learners in their mother tongue or rather the language they understand is beneficial to the entire system. Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Eski'a Mphahlele advocate for the use of indigenous languages in the curriculum and the classroom as well. They assert that learning and understanding your African language for example, will help you understand your culture better and forms the basis of understanding other languages. You therefore have an important task of making sure that learners understand the message you will be required to deliver.

You have to teach in such a way that learners are focused, develop their understanding and therefore guide them towards understanding. This requires you, the prospective classroom teacher, to understand the diverse philosophies of teaching and learning. The following are examples of educational philosophies that provide the basic ideas you need to understand, to help you apply them in your teaching.

- o Perennialism
- o Progressivism
- o Reconstructionism
- o Positivism
- o Constructivism
- o Behaviorism
- o Humanism
- o Essentialism.

Although all of these philosophies differ in many ways, they all focus on effective ways of teaching. These philosophies are beneficial to all learners and should be applied in your classroom. Kindly refer to your ADDITIONAL RESOURCES on the left-hand side of your MENU and retrieve THEORIES OF LEARNING AND PHILOSOPHIES DOCUMENT to learn more about philosophies.



Teaching Processes | Imparting knowledge and values through Indian

Beliefs and Philosophies

<http://www.plato-philosophy.org/teaching-elementary-school-philosophy/>

Teaching Elementary School Philosophy | PLATO - Philosophy ... Philosophy Learning and Teaching

<https://constructivismandexistentialism.wordpress.com/>

Constructivist and Existentialist Education | Just another WordPress.com site

[constructivismandexistentialism.wordpress.com/626 x 356 Search by image](https://constructivismandexistentialism.wordpress.com/626-x-356-search-by-image)

Peer interaction and cooperation are essential in constructivist education.

Philosophy in Elementary School



To learn more about the general benefits and process of philosophizing with children visit the *Teaching Philosophy* FAQ

Young children are naturally inquisitive. They struggle to make sense of their everyday experience and of the academic, social and cultural knowledge they begin to acquire at school – a process they typically enjoy, at least until it becomes routinized and associated with high-stakes rewards and punishments.



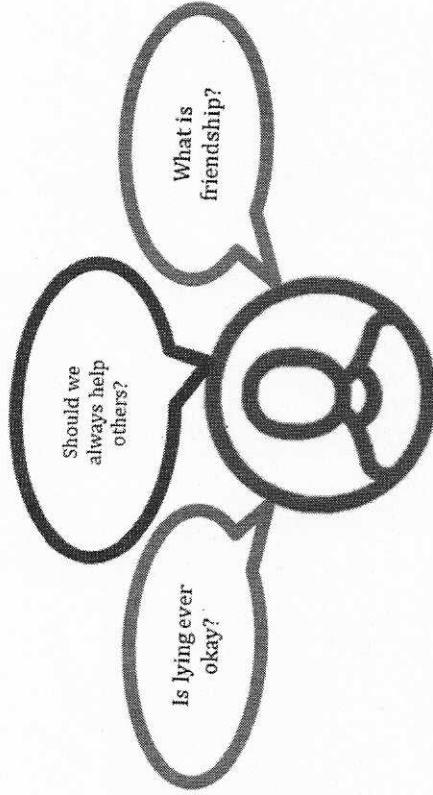
Young children's curiosity and wonder are easily triggered. They are full of questions – and, significantly, many of their questions have philosophical content.

Young children's experience is already replete with philosophical meaning. They have strong, even visceral, intuitions of what is beautiful and ugly, fair and unfair, right and wrong. They enjoy playing with language and are intrigued by logical puzzles.

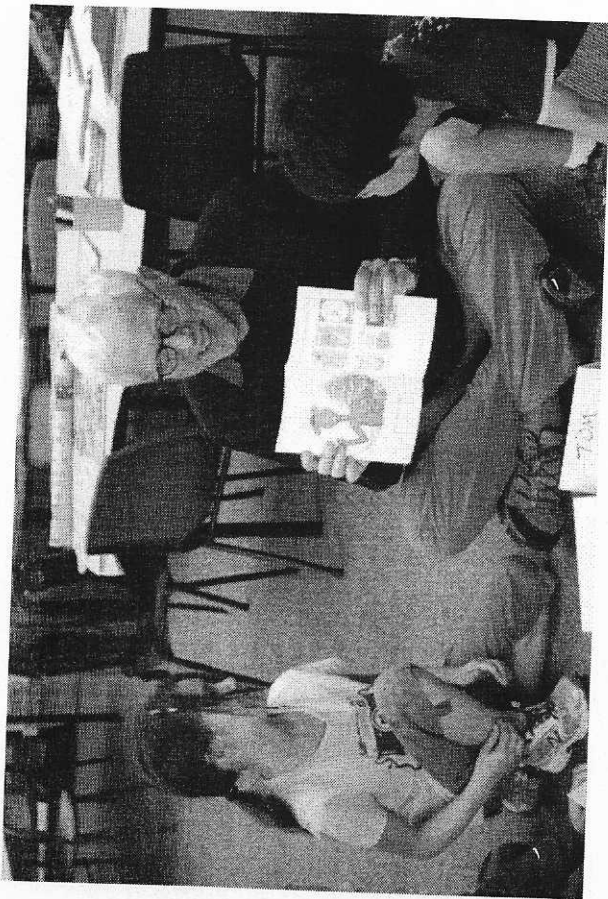


Indeed, many professional philosophers date their interest in philosophy to their early childhoods.

Asking Philosophical Questions Encourages Curiosity & Imagination



Can Elementary Students Really Do Philosophy?



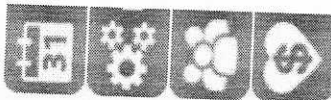
A person of any age can engage in philosophical thinking.

A number of innovative preschool and kindergarten programs have demonstrated that even very young children are able to take turns giving each other reasons. For example, they preschool children can explain why they think different insects are ugly, scary or beautiful – and they will alter their judgments as a result of the conversation.



As children approach adolescence, they often begin to focus on existential questions such as: What does it all mean? Is life ever fair? What is the purpose of my life?

Elementary school philosophy is not about imposing an unfamiliar, ancient, and highly intellectual discipline on children, in the hope it might be good for them, but about giving children the opportunity to explore ethical, aesthetic, political, logical and other philosophical aspects of their experiences that are already intensely meaningful for them, but that are not often given attention in schools (or elsewhere). In that regard, the reasons for elementary school philosophy should be the same as those for every other school subject.



Elementary school philosophy typically uses picture books, hands-on activities and games, or personal stories as the prompt for thinking about philosophical questions.



The content of elementary school philosophy is not the traditional philosophical arguments that are the stuff of high school and college philosophy courses, or the traditional philosophical sub-disciplines of ethics, aesthetics, metaphysics, political philosophy and logic, or even the important figures in the history of philosophy – though some of this may become meaningful for children once they have some experience with philosophy.

Is elementary school philosophy like the philosophy class I took in college?



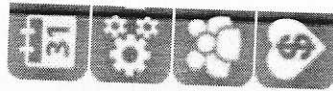
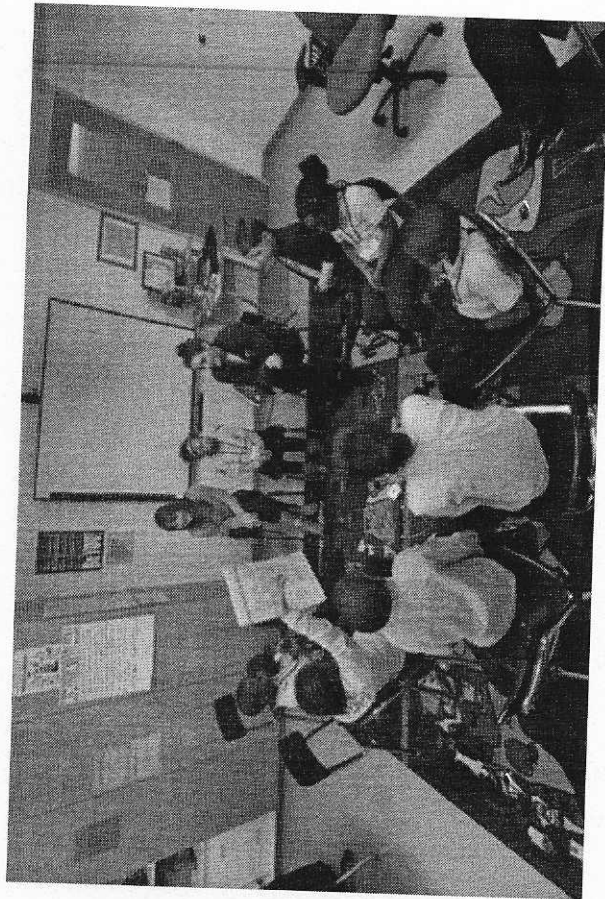
The objectives and structure of any elementary school philosophy program should reflect the children's ages and socio-cultural context.

Some students need several months of practice in order to understand the difference between a question, an answer and a reason, or to be comfortable taking turns talking in a group.



Philosophical engagement with young children needs to be more playful and multi-sensory than philosophy with older children.

Elementary school philosophy draws students' attention to philosophical concepts like fairness, person, mind, beauty, cause, time, number, truth, citizen, good and right – concepts that are already implicated in children's experience, and that children need in order to make their experiences more meaningful, in both senses of that word: more understandable and richer, more worthwhile.



What practical considerations should I keep in mind when developing an elementary school philosophy program?

If you are interested in developing an elementary school philosophy program, it may be helpful to look at existing programs as models and for inspiration:

- University of Washington's Center for Philosophy for Children
- Thomas Wartenberg's Philosophy for Children Model using Picture Books



Check out our guide to creating a pre-college philosophy program as well!

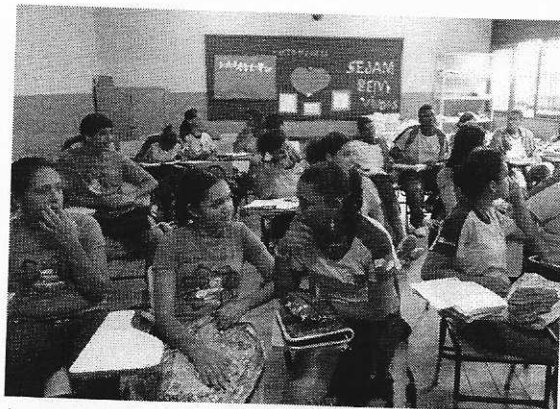
Existentialism: Roles of Teacher and Learner

Posted by: Ginny on: March 14, 2012

The teacher in existentialist education is there to provide pathways for students to explore their own values, meanings, and choices. In order to do this, learners need to be aware of as many options and choices as possible; they need to feel empowered and free to determine their own values and identities; and they need a multiplicity of experiences to enhance their self-awareness. The teacher's primary responsibility is to provide all these things, and to maintain a learning environment where students feel encouraged to express themselves through discussion, creative projects, and choice of study areas.

Self-expression is a key component of existentialist education.

The role of the student is to determine their own values and identity. Existentialist education recognizes the role of both culture and individual nature in identity formation. The existentialist student maintains a dialogue between the self and cultural values: considering the self in cultural context, and considering cultural values in relation to the self. Freedom, choice, and responsibility form a complex interrelation in existentialist philosophy. The student is free to form and pursue their own values, but that freedom comes includes taking full responsibility for those values. The existentialist student accepts responsibility for their own values, feelings, and actions, because these have been self-generated rather than dictated by an authority.



Discussion and interaction between students helps each understand their own values within the social context.

The Constructivist Classroom and Curriculum

Posted by: Ginny on: March 14, 2012

Classroom

A classroom designed with a constructivist philosophy includes lots of hands-on and visual material that learners can explore and interact with. A sexuality classroom might have anatomical models, graphics showing the relationships between gender and sexual identities, and other informational materials around the room, accessible to learners and available for them to examine at their own pace.



The Montessori method of early childhood education uses a largely constructivist approach. The typical Montessori classroom features a wide variety of materials for hands-on learning, with open space and small tables for learners to work individually with areas that interest them. (Image taken from <http://www.foundationhill.com/resources/Montessori+Room+1.JPG>)

Under constructivism, it is important that learners have direct access to materials and information, so that they can pursue areas of particular meaning and interest to them, and construct knowledge on their own timetable. Handbooks or computer workstations where students can consider case studies, search through media, or engage in virtual roleplay could also be powerful constructivist tools in the classroom.

Curriculum

In a constructivist curriculum, the educator must make room to ask open-ended questions. This pushes the learners to look at things past their factual sense and be able to think critically about them. In addition, it must incorporate time for students to be able to process, reflect, and build on what they learned. Real world examples are often used for students to be able to inductively grasp concepts.

Usually, constructivist curriculums do not follow the mold of standard curriculums. It is encouraged to build it around the student's prior knowledge as well as hands on problem solving.

Moreover, the educators should encourage learners to continually reassess what they are learning from the activity and how it is going to apply to their lives. This way the students are not only learning from the activity but they also, "learn how to learn."

Lesson Plans

Scavenger Hunt: Learners are given instructions and resources to conduct an online "scavenger hunt" and gather information about a specific topic. The lesson plan as written focuses on contraceptive methods, but it could easily be adapted for any subject area. Learners return and share the knowledge they have gathered with their peers. The majority of the activity is self-directed, giving learners the freedom to pursue and gather information on their own rather than passively absorbing it from the teacher.

Anatomy Models (Lesson 3.1 in the linked file): Learners are given materials and references and asked to collaborate in building three-dimensional models of male and female sexual anatomy. This is a hands-on, cooperative approach to teaching anatomy, and lets students develop a close understanding of reproductive and sexual anatomy using their own skills and creativity.

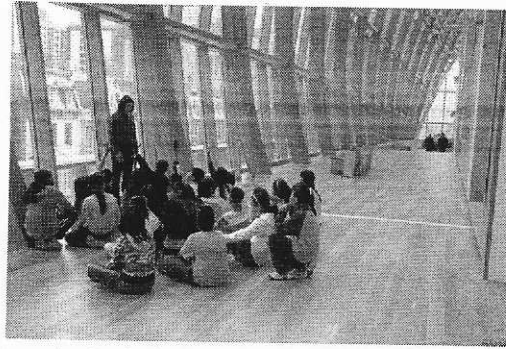
Body Collage: In groups, using magazines with a wide variety of images, learners create collages of attractive people of their own gender. Using the collages and their own lists of body features considered attractive or unattractive in their culture, learners consider overall messages and ideas about attractiveness in their culture. The teacher facilitates discussion and critique of these ideas based on the material that students developed.

The Existentialist Classroom and Curriculum

Posted by: Ginny on: March 14, 2012

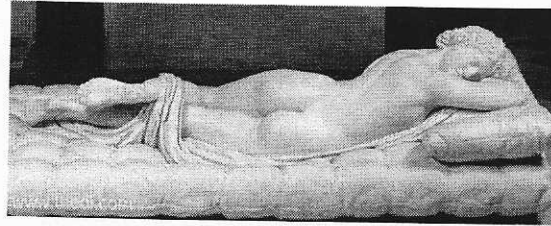
Classroom

Existentialist education could happen in a variety of classroom settings: a round conference table, an empty room, under a tree. Because the teacher is a facilitator of learning and self-reflection, rather than a didactic authority, a setting that places learners and teacher on an equal footing is ideal. A circular arrangement of learners and teachers promotes discussion and ensures that everybody in the classroom can be a participant. Because providing exposure to different experiences is a key part of the teacher's role, an existentially-designed class might travel to different locations.



A bare floor, giant windows, a precipitous drop: how existential!

Another way to provide experiences and trigger learners' self-reflection is to fill the room with artwork that will evoke a strong response. Giving the learners an opportunity to respond to evocative material helps them understand their own values and construct meanings around various aspects of sexuality.



The Borghese Hermaphrodite, front view.

The Borghese Hermaphrodite is a provocative sculpture displaying what appears, from the front, to be a reclining nude woman. Walking around the sculpture the viewer sees that the figure also has a penis, testicles, and breasts. The simple visual conflict between what the viewer expects to see and what they actually see creates a complex reaction around ideas of gender, beauty, and attraction. Simply having an artwork like this displayed in a classroom creates opportunities for the learner to create individual meanings around sexuality and gender ambiguity.

Curriculum

Existential curriculum content is focused on individuals and relationships: relationships between learners, learner-teacher relationships, and even the learners' relationships with historical individuals, who demonstrate possible actions and choices for the learner to model their own life after. The primary aim of the curriculum is to help learners develop their own values and understand themselves within their own cultural context: rather than being dense with facts to learn, an existential curriculum includes activities that will help learners explore and express their own values and identities.

Choice and freedom are fundamental to existentialist philosophy. One object of a curriculum will be to expose learners to a wide range of options from which to choose their own identity, goals, and values. Learners should be given a great deal of freedom to pursue areas of interest, and to engage with peers in discussions that help them shape and clarify their individual values in a social context.

Lesson plans

Four Corners Values Clarification: This and other values clarification exercises provide a way for learners to think through and express their values. This activity can be easily adapted for any topic or learner population by changing the questions asked. Time is given for learners to articulate why they chose the position they did, which provides the self-expression and identity formation that are essential to existentialist education.

Body Concerns: This activity allows learners to consider their own feelings about their bodies from a variety of perspectives. Learners are given time to discuss concerns about body image and sexual function generated both within and outside the classroom. Emphasis of the activity is on learners' own thoughts and responses to the concerns raised, rather than the teacher's input. Time is also given to considering the social context of body concerns, helping learners place their own values and ideas in a cultural context.

The Culture Connection: Learners generate information about their own culture's values and messages around sexuality, using personal observation and discussions with family and friends. When they return to the classroom, they discuss and compare with their peers, and then critically examine the messages for positive and negative content. Students are free to decide for themselves what values they consider negative and what they consider positive.

Making Difficult Decisions: Students are introduced to a decision-making model that incorporates generating alternatives, assessing consequences, and considering values. Understanding as many alternatives as possible, and freely choosing based on one's values, are core tenets of existentialism, and thus this lesson plan helps students develop valuable skills for taking responsibility for their own lives and choices.

Existentialism

Posted by: bytorres on: March 14, 2012

When it comes to existentialism, the learning that takes place is very subjective. The material to be taught is secondary to experience. It's all about helping the learner develop a sense of self. They have to be able to take the information presented and choose what path to take based on themselves as unique individual.

Main Theorists

Soren Kierkegaard (1813-1855)

Kierkegaard is considered to be one of the founding fathers of existentialism. He was a minister and philosopher. His existentialist philosophy was people should be prepared, if necessary, to go against society if it would lead to a more "personally valid and meaningful path."

Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900)

Friedrich Nietzsche was a German philosopher around in the 19th century. Along with Kierkegaard, he was considered a founding father of existentialism. He questioned traditional moral beliefs along with Christianity. He had a strong belief in bettering the self as well as the culture. He believes in the idea of "life-affirmation" which basically means that one should question any societal beliefs that could "drain life's expansive energies," regardless of how popular those beliefs may be.

Martin Heidegger (1889-1971)

Martin Heidegger started his career out as a theology student and then embarked on a career as a phenomenologist. His primary concerns were making sure he was living an "authentic life." His other concerns included the meaning behind our mortality and where we fit into the world in regards to other individuals.

Constructivism: Roles of Teacher and Learner

Posted by: Ginny on: March 14, 2012



The constructivist teacher facilitates learners' interactions with hands-on and self-directed learning activities.

The role of the teacher in constructivist philosophy is adapt to the learner's needs and give them the freedom to construct knowledge for themselves. Each learner is considered as a unique individual, with cultural background, individual disposition, and prior knowledge influencing their learning. The teacher must consider all these factors, and then assist the learner in pursuing new knowledge and placing what they have learned into the context of their own lives.

The teacher should pay attention to two particular factors in assisting learners. First, they should consider the learner's zone of proximal development, and give the learners the help they need in constructing new knowledge and meanings. Second, they should facilitate peer interaction and cooperation between learners, since the social and cultural context of learning is essential in constructivist philosophy.

Peer interaction and cooperation are essential in constructivist education.

While much of learning is self-directed, the teacher has a lot of work to do. They must ensure that learners have access to sufficiently challenging material to grow, but not so challenging that learners become hopeless and give up on their self-directed efforts. The teacher must be flexible and adapt to learners' individual interests and needs. And the teacher must ensure that the environment is positive and supportive, so that students will feel emotionally secure and able to challenge themselves cognitively.

The role of the learner in constructivist philosophy is to engage and interact with the world around them, with peers, with authorities, and with educational materials. Through active engagement the learner constructs knowledge and meaning, observing how objects and ideas interact, and creating a cognitive framework for making sense of it all. The learner is often free to pursue their own interests, as long as they are challenging themselves and forming new ideas throughout the process.



Child in a Montessori classroom learns a variety of physical principles and kinesthetic abilities by working with cups, pitchers, and water. (Picture taken

from http://katygtacademy.org/yahoo_site_admin/assets/images/DSC05330.8585926.JPG)

Learners are not in competition with one another: they are expected and encouraged to work cooperatively, sharing knowledge and perspectives. Learners may often take on the role of teacher in some area where they have particular knowledge, thereby both assisting their peers and reinforcing their own knowledge.

Giving students the opportunity to act as teachers is empowering and helps them take ownership over the knowledge they have constructed.

Constructivism

Posted by: bytorres on: March 14, 2012

Constructivist theory is simple: give students information, let them decide how it applies to their life.

Basically, the learner is the most important part of the learning process. The teacher often gives power to the students rather than holding it all themselves. It give students the ability to take in

the information in the context of their life. This gives them the tools to solve problems in their own ways, in other words, they "master autonomy and independence." In this theory, the student's learning is constantly affected by their attitudes, beliefs, and is being combined with any prior knowledge.

Main Theorists

John Dewey (1859-1952)

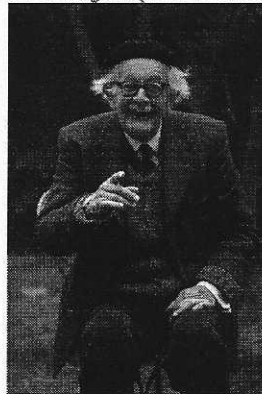


Picture taken from: <http://dewey.pragmatism.org/>

John Dewey graduated from Johns Hopkins with a PhD in 1884. Throughout his life, he taught in various universities, including University of Michigan, University of Minnesota, University of Chicago, and Columbia University. He also traveled to Japan, China, and Vietnam. In the United States he concerned himself with women's suffrage, progressive education, educator's rights, the humanistic movement, and world peace.

When it comes to education, Dewey felt that students should learn things in real life situations. For example, want to teach math? How about teaching about fractions through cooking!

Jean Piaget (1896-1980)



Picture taken from: <http://www.nwlink.com/~donclark/hrd/history/piaget.html>

Jean Piaget had quite a diverse career. Originally, he was a biologist studying mullusks. (Eww.) After publishing 20 papers he decided to study the development of children (eww, twice).



At this time he constructed his four states of cognitive development (that's a whole other presentation).

When it comes to education, he felt that children weren't just empty vessels to be filled with facts through lecturing. He felt that when children learn, they need actively participate in the learning.

Vygotsky had quite the career change as well. When he started out, he had a law degree from Moscow University. He was fascinated by psychology and began working as a psychologist (despite having no formal training) with two others, Alexander Luria and Alexei Leontiev. His theory about the Zone of Proximal Development has heavily influenced education. He is considered a main contributor to constructivist theories because his Sociocultural Theory is based on the idea that children learn by interacting with people and culture in general.

Education in Madagascar

Education in Madagascar has a long and distinguished history. Formal schooling began with medieval Arab seafarers, who established a handful of Islamic primary schools (*kuttabs*) and developed a transcription of the Malagasy language using Arabic script, known as *sorabe*. These schools were short-lived, and formal education was only to return under the 19th-century Kingdom of Madagascar when the support of successive kings and queens produced the most developed public school system in precolonial Sub-Saharan Africa. However, formal schools were largely limited to the central highlands around the capital of Antananarivo and were frequented by children of the noble class andriana. Among other segments of the island's population, traditional education predominated through the early 20th century. This informal transmission of communal knowledge, skills and norms was oriented toward preparing children to take their place in a social hierarchy dominated by community elders and particularly the ancestors (*razana*), who were believed to oversee and influence events on earth.

Since coming under French colonial authority in 1896, the education system in Madagascar has steadily expanded into more remote and rural communities while coming under increased control of the state. National education objectives have reflected changing government priorities over time. Colonial schooling taught basic skills and French language fluency to most children, while particularly strong students were selected to receive training for civil servant roles at the secondary level... Post-independence education in the First Republic (1960–1975) under President Philibert Tsiranana retained a strong French influence with textbooks and teachers of French origin. The post-colonial backlash that brought about the Second Republic (1975–1992) saw schools serve as vehicles for citizen indoctrination into Admiral Didier Ratsiraka's socialist ideology. The dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 prompted a wave of democratization across Africa, launching the democratic Third Republic (1992–2010). Renewed international cooperation resulted in significant foreign aid for the education sector, which adopted numerous reforms promoted by United Nations organizations and other partners in the international development sector.

Education was prioritized under President Marc Ravalomanana (2001–2009), who sought to improve both access and quality of formal and non-formal education. A massive campaign of school renovation, expansion and construction has been coupled with the recruitment and training of tens of thousands more teachers. This initiative was supported with funds from intergovernmental organizations such as the World Bank and UNESCO, and bilateral grants from many countries, including France, the United States and Japan. A key pedagogical objective of these reforms included a shift from a traditional, didactic teaching style to a student-centered form of instruction involving frequent group work. As of 2009, Madagascar was on target to achieve the Education For All objective of universal enrollment at the primary level. Student achievement, teacher quality, widespread shortage of materials and access to secondary and tertiary schooling continue to be challenges, as are poverty-related obstacles such as high repetition and attrition rates and poor student health. The 2009 political crisis in Madagascar resulted in cessation of all but emergency aid to the country, further exacerbating poverty-related challenges and threatening to undo much recent progress in the education sector.



A rural public primary school classroom outside Antsirananana, Madagascar (2008)

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History of education in Madagascar

Before 1820

Traditionally, education in Madagascar was an informal affair consisting of the transmission of the social norms, practices and knowledge developed and handed down within the community over generations. The hierarchical structure of most traditional Malagasy communities placed elders, parents and other persons of esteem over younger or less distinguished members of the group, and over whom the ancestors (*razana*) exercised the greatest authority of all. In the context of such a stratified society, traditional education underscored the importance of maintaining one's proper place, trained people in the proper observance of ritual and innumerable *fady* (taboos) and, above all, taught respect for ancestors.^[1]

(Children) learn to respect elders and the *ray aman-dreny* (authority figures) and to conform to their opinions, speak the appropriate words, follow the rules of traditional wisdom and fear the chastigation they can expect in response to their antisocial actions.

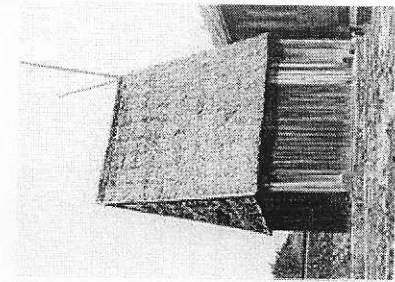
— H. Raharijaona, *Le droit de la famille à Madagascar*^[2]

Learning one's place in traditional Malagasy society extended beyond the youth-adult-elder-ancestor hierarchy. Among many Malagasy ethnic groups, individuals were identified with particular castes; in traditional Merina society, for example, one of the three main castes had seven sub-castes. These divisions were overlaid by such additional factors as gender roles, with consequences for informal education: boys were expected to behave as befits one who would eventually become a *ray aman-dreny*, while girls were expected to demonstrate mastery of domestic skills and cultivate the qualities of a good wife and mother.^[2]

The earliest formal schooling on Madagascar was introduced by Arab seafarers, whose influence on coastal communities extends at least as far back as the 11th century. These travelers attempted to propagate Islam by establishing a limited number of *kuttabs* (Quranic schools that taught literacy and basic numeracy) and transcribed the Malagasy language using the Arabic alphabet in a script termed *sorabe*. These schools did not persist, and *sorabe* literacy passed into the realm of arcane knowledge reserved for astrologers, kings and other privileged elites.^[3]

1820–1896

The first formal European-style school was established in 1818 on the east coast of Madagascar at Toamasina by members of the London Missionary Society (LMS). King Radama I (1810–1828), the first sovereign to bring about half the island of Madagascar under his rule, was interested in strengthening ties with European powers; to this end, he invited LMS missionaries to open a school in his capital at Antananarivo within the Rova palace compound to instruct the royal family in literacy, numeracy and basic education. This first school, known as the Palace School, was established by LMS missionary David Jones on December 8, 1820, within the Besakana, a building of great historic and cultural significance. Within months, due to the rapid increase in the number interested in studying there, classes were transferred to a larger, purpose-built structure on the Rova grounds.^[4] By 1822, LMS missionaries had successfully transcribed the Merina dialect of the Malagasy language using the Latin alphabet. This dialect, spoken in the central highlands around Antananarivo,



Besakana, site of the original Palace School on the Rova compound of Antananarivo

was declared the official version of the Malagasy language that year – a status that the highlands dialect has retained ever since.^[5] The Bible, which was incrementally translated into this dialect and printed on a press (a process completed in 1835),^[6] was the first book printed in the Malagasy language and became the standard text used to teach literacy, thereby spreading the tenets of Christianity in Imerina.^[7]

Convinced that Western schooling was vital to developing Madagascar's political and economic strength, in 1825 Radama declared primary schooling to be compulsory for the *andriana* (nobles) throughout Imerina. Schools were constructed in larger towns throughout the central highlands and staffed with teachers from the LMS and other missionary organizations. By the end of Radama's reign in 1829, 38 schools were providing basic education to over 4,000 students in addition to the 300 students studying at the Palace School.^[5] Teaching dual messages of loyalty and obedience to Radama's rule and the fundamentals of Christian theology.^[7] These schools also provided Radama with a ready pool of educated conscripts for his military activities; consequently, some *andriana* families sent slave children to spare their own offspring from the perils of military life, producing an educated minority among the lower classes of Merina society.^[8] An additional 600 students received vocational training under Scottish missionary James Cameron. However, Radama's successor and widow, Queen Ranavalona I (1828–1861), grew increasingly wary of foreign influence on the island over the course of her 33-year reign. She forbade the education of slaves in 1834. The following year, all of Radama's schools were ordered closed and their missionary teachers were expelled from the country.^[5]

Prime Minister Rainilaiarivony (1864–1895), who married Queens Rasoherina (1863–1868), Ranavalona II (1868–1883) and Ranavalona III (1883–1897) in succession, reopened and dramatically expanded the system of schools beginning in 1864. The policy of mandatory schooling among the *andriana* was reinstated in 1872; by 1881, schooling was declared compulsory for all Malagasy children regardless of ethnicity or class. Two years later, 1,155 mission schools were providing basic education to 133,695 students, establishing the Malagasy school system as the most developed in precolonial Sub-Saharan Africa.^[9]

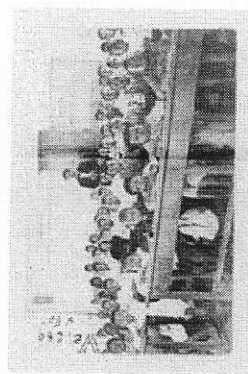
1896–1960

During the colonial period, the French established a system of public schools that was divided into two parts: elite schools, modeled after those of France and reserved for the children of French citizens (a status few Malagasy enjoyed); and indigenous schools for the Malagasy, which offered practical and vocational education but were not designed to train students for positions of leadership or responsibility. Within the first seven years of the colonial period 650 indigenous schools had been established, half of which were dispersed over coastal areas where the schools of the Kingdom of Madagascar had not reached. This initiative expanded the number of students in Madagascar by 50,000, who studied a curriculum focused primarily on French language acquisition and basic knowledge in such areas as hygiene and arithmetic.^[10] The long-established mission schools continued to represent a viable education alternative until 1906, when French laws placed stringent restrictions on their operation, forcing thousands of students out of mission schools without adequate capacity to accommodate them within the public system.^[11]

Middle-grade Malagasy civil servants and functionaries were trained at the *écoles régionales* (regional schools), the most important of which was the *École le Myre de Villers* in Antananarivo. Reforms of the public school system designed to give the Malagasy more education opportunities were initiated after World War II. At independence in 1960, the country had a system of education almost identical to that of France.^[1]

Structure

Education is compulsory for children between the ages of six and fourteen. The current education system provides primary schooling for five years, from ages six to eleven. Secondary education lasts for seven years and is divided into two parts: a junior secondary level of four years from ages twelve to fifteen, and a senior secondary level of three years from ages sixteen to eighteen. At the end of the junior level, graduates receive a certificate, and at the end of the senior level, graduates receive the *baccalauréat* (the equivalent of a high school diploma). A vocational secondary school system, the *collège professionnelle* (professional college), is the equivalent of the junior secondary level; the college technique (technical college), which awards the *baccalauréat technique* (technical diploma), is the equivalent of the senior level.^[1]



Education in the colonial period sought to create productive workers.

The University of Madagascar, established as an Institute for Advanced Studies in 1955 in Antananarivo and renamed in 1961, is the main institute of higher education. It maintains six separate, independent branches in Antananarivo, Antsirana, Fianarantsoa, Toamasina, Toliara, and Mahajanga. (Before 1988, the latter five institutions were provincial extensions of the main university in Antananarivo.) The university system consists of several faculties, including law and economics, sciences, and letters and human sciences, and numerous schools that specialize in public administration, management, medicine, social welfare, public works, and agronomy. Official reports have criticized the excessive number of students at the six universities: a total of 40,000 in 1994, whereas the collective capacity is 26,000. Reform measures are underway to improve the success rate of students—only 10 percent complete their programs, and the average number of years required to obtain a given degree is eight to ten compared with five years for African countries. The baccalauréat is required for admission to the university. [1]

Performance

Descriptive statistics

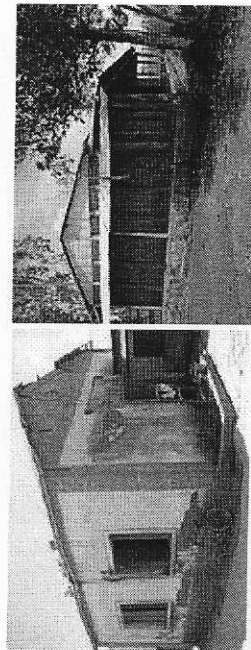
Primary school enrollment is nearly universal, a significant increase from the lower figure of 65 percent enrollment in 1965 (Madagascar had 13,000 public primary schools in 1994); 36 percent of the relevant school-age population attends secondary school (there were 700 general education secondary schools and eighty lycées or classical secondary institutions) and 5 percent of the relevant school-age population attends institutions of higher learning. Despite these statistics, a 1993 UNICEF report considers the education system a "failure," pointing out that in contrast to the early 1980s when education represented approximately 33 percent of the national budget, in 1993 education constituted less than 20 percent of the budget, and 95 percent of this amount was devoted to salaries. The average number of years required for a student to complete primary school was twelve. Girls have equal access with boys to educational institutions. [1]

Outcomes

The gradual expansion of education opportunities has had an impressive impact on Malagasy society, most notably in raising the literacy level of the general population. Only 39 percent of the population could be considered literate in 1966, but the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) estimated that this number had risen to 50 percent at the beginning of the 1980s [1] and to 64 percent in 2010. [12]

Challenges

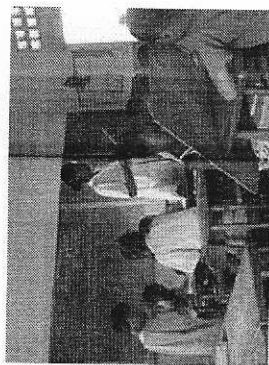
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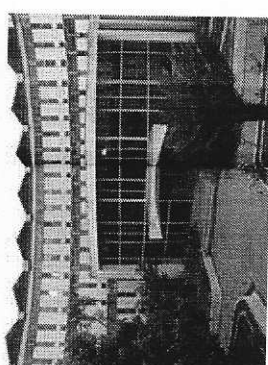
A historic school in the Central Highlands town (left) and a new school in a coastal village (right)

The national education system often has been at the center of political debate. As is the case throughout Africa, education credentials provide one of the few opportunities to obtain employment in a country with a limited private sector, and the distribution of educational resources has continued to be an issue with explosive political ramifications.

Historically, the system has been characterized by an unequal distribution of education resources among the regions of the country. Because the central highlands had a long history of formal education beginning in the early nineteenth century, this region had more schools and higher educational standards than the coastal regions. The disparity continued to be a major divisive factor in national life in the years following independence. The Merina and the Betsileo peoples, having better access to schools, inevitably tended to be overrepresented in administration and the professions, both under French colonialism and after independence in 1960.



Recent education reforms have sought to transition from teacher-centered to learner-centered methods of instruction.



Ministry of Education, Antananarivo

Adding to these geographical inequities is the continued lack of education opportunities for the poorest sectors of society. For example, the riots that led to the fall of the Tsiranana regime in 1972 were initiated by students protesting official education and language policies, including a decision to revoke the newly established competitive examination system that would have allowed access to public secondary schools on the basis of merit rather than the ability to pay. Yet when the Ratsiraka regime attempted in 1978 to correct historical inequalities and make standards for the baccalauréat lower in the disadvantaged provinces outside the capital region, Merina students led riots against what they perceived as an inherently unfair preferential treatment policy.^[1]

See also

- Higher education in Madagascar
- Keelonga

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STAGE 1: Pre-Reading

1. Spend 5 to 10 minutes selecting three to four different pictures of the different members of the community you have just watched. Analyse each of their roles in the family or in the community. Looking at the pictures you have selected share your views on whether everybody shares the same philosophical beliefs about the purpose of education as you understand it. Write some notes you will need to use later.
2. Based on the notes you made formulate some questions that you hope the Readings below will help to answer.

STAGE 2: Reading Stage

1. Search for information on the internet that relates to the philosophy of teaching and learning you selected and read. Highlight important points and make notes and keep for later use.
2. In your own view, write some notes on what constitutes effective teaching and learning?

STAGE 3: Post Reading

1. Organize what you have learned in the readings in the form of a mind map or table and write five (5) statements about the readings.
2. Answer this question "How can this diversity of opinions be used to strengthen quality instead of resulting in chaos"?
3. Keep all your notes to help you form the basis of your discussion.
4. Remember to provide complete references for any direct quotations.

OER Images

OER Images

STAGE 4: REVIEWING THE PICTURES

- 4.1 Look at the above pictures and identify a philosophy of teaching that you think is being used in each of the above classes
- 4.2 Use a blog (allocated on the left side of your myUnisa screen) to share your ideas.

3.5 MEMBERSHIP OF PROFESSIONAL TEACHING AND LEARNING COMMUNITIES

As much as you belong to the community in which you live, you also need to belong to the community of your profession. Belonging to a community of your teaching and learning profession has its own merit if your focus is also based on your growth and development. The advantage is that engaging with members of your professional group and the community of your profession at large, affords you the opportunity to learn from other group members. This is another way of encouraging you to want to improve yourself and this spills down to benefit your learners. Literature supports the assumption that the performance of learners increases when teachers participate in PLCs (DuFour, 2006). In addition, belonging to a professional community reduces the isolation that teachers sometimes experience and enhances creativity and support from other members of the profession.

The teaching profession consists of a variety of professional groups. You need to read more to understand the role they play in your profession and how this can help you develop and grow within your teaching professionally.

<https://www.edutopia.org/blog/modern-professional-learning-plc-pln-vicki-davis>

A group of educators are sitting in a room, listening to a speaker.

<http://www.schoolnet.org.za/uncategorized/ict4red-modules-78-training-in-cofimvaba-uses-two-great-teaching-strategies/>

Teachers in the Cofimvaba ICT4RED project schools have been methodically working through modules of their professional development course since July 2013

ACTIVITY 3.4 - NOT FOR SUBMISSION

ACTIVITY 3.5 DISCUSSION FORUM - NOT FOR SUBMISSION

3.7 REFLECTION ON LESSON 3

The purpose of this section is to help us understand how well the online delivery of this lesson enabled you to learn.

There are no "right" or wrong answers. We are only interested in your opinion. Please be assured that your contribution will make a difference.

- Write 5 statements about your experience in this lesson and keep this information for later use in the year.
- Suggest ways in which we can improve this lesson.

[BACK](#)