

# A philosophical assessment

Philosophy



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

A Philosophical Assessment in Kauchak & Eggen: Chapter 7 (Examining Your Beliefs). Lance DeLong Of the four philosophies of education; Perennialism, Essentialism, Progressivism and Social reconstructionism, the one that seem to best fit my fundamental beliefs would be reflected in Essentialism philosophy. This is, because I believe that the role of the public school system is to teach students essential elements of knowledge that then in turn enables the student to develop critical thinking skills associated with advanced critical thinking.

These learned skills can only be applied after a student has gained the knowledge necessary to function effectively in society, and only after he understands that society can he make critical decisions relating to that society. The dilemmas identified in the situation posed by the text book exercise; “ Decision Making: Developing Your Philosophy of Education”, can be analyzed through the perspective of this educational philosophy as such: The basic premise of what are the responsibilities of the education system and how we achieve critical thinking speaks to the issues presented in the first part of this exercise.

The essence of understanding what one is thinking about and making decisions on, must first be established in the student's mind, would be my opinion. Essentialism, is the idea that centers around basic truths that must be learned in order for students to engage and participate in such activities. Essentialism is a belief that life is a series of building blocks and certain truths must be learned that allows the student to achieve advancement and an understanding of the society and the culture in which they are making decisions on.

This philosophy must also be looked at in the light of our Christian world view and the Bible. The Bible must be the basis and reflection of all philosophical truth. Paul warns us in Col. 2: 8, “ Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ”. Though not all worldly philosophies are deceiving and drawing us away from Christ, I believe that any that question the basic tenants of education set forth in the scripture to be contrary to said and easily disassociated.

The basic principle acknowledged by essentialists is that there are essential truth and those truths are to be imparted in the educational system. While absolute truths are communicated through scripture and basic academic truths regarding history, English, mathematics, and literature are the basis for this philosophy; one must acknowledge this, to be the basic responsibility of an educational system, imparting absolutes, to be an essentialist. Other educational philosophies that foster the process of discovering truth rather than acknowledging truth must be recognized for what they are “ vain deceit”.

Another principle the essentialists would hold true to, is that learning requires discipline and usually is accomplished through hard work. This seems to be negatively reflected in the situation presented in the text book. The students in the example seem to have been the product of a system that does not teach personal discipline and hard work as evidenced in their attitude for a quick solution and desire to learn just what is required to get by.

If these students had been exposed to a system associated with discipline and hard work and that was the standard, questions such as “ why do we have to learn this stuff” would not have been posed and comments such as “ C’mon just tell us what you want us to know” would not need to be made because students would have learned that hard work and discipline produces usually positive results. It seems that these students have been given and have not learned to work for their education.

If these foundational principles had been instilled into these students through a disciplined learning environment they would not have been left to their own devices as it seems these students have, but would have developed a deliberate regimented method to learning one that would have been measured and proved through testing. Also, in the situation presented, there seemed to be an element of disrespect associated to the system and the teacher. The element of submission to authority has not been instilled in the students.

Paul tells us in I Peter 5: 5, “ Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble”, the element of authority and the respect thereof has seemingly not been established in this learning environment. The essentialist recognizes the traditional teacher centered philosophy where the respect for authority is the basis for the importance of the information being communicated.

The imparting of knowledge, information, and skills from the older (presumably wiser) generation to the younger one is imperative in this philosophy. The teacher's responsibility is not only to impart those

mentioned elements of basic education, but also to instill respect for authority, and moral norms as deemed acceptable in a society. The situation described in said scenario seems to be a reoccurring dilemma recognized in our public school systems today. This seems not to be a need to redefine the educational system, but a need to readdress roles and responsibilities.

Going back to the principles of the founder of the essentialist educational theory, William C. Bagley seems to be the answer. His basis principles of “the recognized right of an immature student to the guidance of a well-educated, caring, and cultured teacher”, would seemed to have resolved the assumed attitude of the students in question of non-importance of education. That “the imparting of the ideals of community to each succeeding generation of children”, would have resolved the issue of respect for the teaching system and teacher and would have fostered the feeling of community and society. Having a specific program of studies that required thoroughness, accuracy, persistence, and good workmanship on the part of pupils”, would have set the precedence and provide the students specifically with what was required of them. I would agree with Professor Bagley’s statement of “(American) essentialism is grounded in a conservative philosophy that accepts the social, political, and economic structure of American society and schools should not try to radically reshape society”.

I hold to the same thought that American schools should transmit the traditional moral values and intellectual knowledge and those students need to become model citizens. I hold to the basic tenant that when a student leaves school that they should possess basic skills and an extensive body of knowledge, discipline and a practical mind that then allows them to apply

school house lessons in a real and practical world. Finally I believe the American school system is in decline as evidenced in the 2009 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP).

The results of these test showed that only about one third of American students exhibited proficiency in technology and science. “Living in the past” is the phrase I will use as some reflect on the fact that in the 1950s SAT scores reached an all-time high as reflected by the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS), surveying Adults 16-65 relating not to math and science but literacy. As years go by statistics continue to drop. The current administration has promised even more spending on their “Race to the Top” initiative with seeming little or no positive results.

Some will find excuses for the decline, but it seems to me that the progressive mind set relating to current educational philosophies is not necessarily working and that a return to traditional values and proven theories of education would be prudent to return to. A philosophical model of education that reflects the principles of ultimate truths do not change and that sound conservative practices of essentialism seems to be the basis for this return.