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Scholarly Reflection #1: Initial Thoughts

What first caught my attention from our class discussions was the idea of “outcome-based education” and how we are “not creating thoughtful and mindful thinkers”. I think it is interesting that, in the education system, we are so concerned with being driven by learning outcomes and objectives that we lose sight of the creativity and critical thinking behind it all. A point was raised through this discussion that it is difficult to predict what students are going to get out of a lesson or a class in general. So the question I have is: why are we trying to predict these outcomes in the first place?

After doing a few readings, I am now beginning to understand how incorporating these learning outcomes into curriculum has become a lip service and is ultimately a political agenda of the overarching school board, as Woodford explains (2019). To say that intellectual curiosity and political interest have been extinguished in schools is quite profound in my opinion, and I completely agree. I do, however, want to add that I feel these learning outcomes are solely used to hold people accountable for their actions; in particular, teachers. And in doing so, the idea of intellectual curiosity and political interest, as Woodford (2019) states, is completely disregarded. We are prescribing thoughts into our students before they even have the chance to think about these thoughts themselves. Instead, I believe they are being taught to think for the teacher, meaning think what the teacher wants them to think.

I find learning outcomes very problematic. I am guilty for adhering to this method through my own teaching experiences and also letting it guide (or maybe even dictate) my own learning. Now, I understand how it hinders students' own critical awareness. This method tells them exactly what they need to know, how they are going to learn it, and what they will get out of it. There is no room for creative thought or engagement in learning here. It is simply the teacher telling students exactly what to think and how to think about it.

Understanding Reimer's belief of 'Aesthetic Education' helped me navigate what was problematic about "outcome-based learning". As Reimer (2002) explains, music is one basic way that humans can come to understand themselves and the world. So, for me, it makes perfect sense to allow students to explore it themselves. Yes, as educators we will be the ones to guide the students through their own personal explorations, but it is not our job to instill these thoughts in their minds. I agree that there are certain objective truths in music, such as theory, but there are also subjective opinions and beliefs that allow students to engage in critical thinking, and I know this will become important in developing my own teaching philosophy.

One last point that really resonated with me was Adorno's pedagogical viewpoint. He speaks of making us aware to certain mechanisms which have the ability to influence us so powerfully that we become subjected to what we might know as "group think" (1997). This is a powerful statement for me. Adorno wants us to prevent a future Auschwitz and believes that a general awareness can accomplish exactly this. But how are we to make our students aware of such things if we do not let them think critically? How will we allow our students to explore if we are subjecting them to only certain learning outcomes? Also known as political agendas, in my opinion. This is how it all becomes problematic for me again. I believe that the basis of

students' music education is rooted in exploration and creativity, while also providing them with a firm foundation of technique and training. However, as explained by Reimer (2002), it is not so easy to adhere to our educational philosophies while also advocating for ourselves and our students.

References

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