

Giới thiệu Nghĩa Sinh Trần-Lâm Phát

Anh Phát làm quen và hoạt động với Nghĩa Sinh từ Tết Mậu Thân 1968. Tốt nghiệp Đại Học Sư Phạm tại Việt Nam, anh Phát đi dạy học nhiều nơi, có nhiều kỷ niệm ngọt bùi, đắng cay.

Cuộc hành trình sang Mỹ đầy gian nan, thử thách nhưng anh Phát đã tự khắc phục để vươn lên... để được như ngày nay.

Hai hình chụp nơi anh Trần Lâm Phát làm việc đó là Surry nuclear power station simulator. Anh Phát đảm trách về Hardware Engineer từ 1987 đến nay (2010). Trước đó anh dạy ở John Tyler Community Collge khoảng 1 năm. Từ 19 tháng 3 năm 1984 cho đến 31-12-1986 anh làm Instrument Technician cho nhà máy phát điện chạy bằng than (Chesterfield power station).

Cuộc đời dạy học của anh ở Việt Nam và hành trình làm việc của anh ở Mỹ là gương sáng sống động đáng cho tất cả anh chị em Nghĩa Sinh chúng ta học hỏi và noi theo.



“A Personal Statement of Philosophy” là một bài viết rất giá trị về tư tưởng xây dựng và tổ chức xã hội nhân bản. Mời quý anh chị cùng đọc.

Nội san Liên Nghĩa

My Personal Statement of Philosophy

Phat Tran-Lam

November 23, 2006

A Personal Statement of Philosophy

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Introduction

I wanted to be a teacher when I was ten years old. Time passed, and I graduated from the school of pedagogy, University of Saigon in June 1972 and became a high school teacher. In 1975, the communists took over my country; they exiled me for more than three years. Finally, I had to give up my teaching career in tears. If I have a chance to go back to my passion for teaching, I will apply my personal philosophy of education again.

My philosophy of education combines many different philosophies from the Eastern and Western traditions. The philosophers who influenced my teaching career the most are Confucius, Chuang Tsu, Mencius, Thomas Jefferson, John Dewey, and Paulo Freire.

Education is the long training process to produce a moral and honest citizen; it also creates knowledge and skills for a student to compete in job markets. Education is a close loop of family, schools system, and society.

Role of family

Family is a foundation of education. A mother is the first teacher; when a child still is newborn, she teaches her child how to drink milk and how to hold a bottle of milk; when a child is little older, she teaches her child how to eat, how to play, and how to speak; finally, she teaches her child manners, morals, and ethics. A Vietnamese proverb says, "If you want to bend a bamboo, you must bend when it is still young." If parents try to teach their children morals and virtues when they are young, the school should not

have any problem to educate them and train them to be excellent citizens and great leaders.

On September 28, 1998, during the speech on the teacher's day in Hong Kong, Mr. William Cheung- president of Confucius Publishing Co- said, "When Confucius taught us to cultivate the self, regulate the family, rule the state and bring peace to all under heaven, politics and moral teaching were treated as one."

Parents have responsibilities for their children's education. Today many parents send their children to nursery schools or baby sitters' places, and they do not have much time to teach their children as they should. The material lifestyle controls the parents who are too busy dealing with their financial crisis and forget the main duties to their family. Parents and their environments easily influence the children. Nobody loves and cares for a child better than parents. The children need to develop in a good environment; they need loving attention. Their development generates from loving, caring and freedom. Parents need to involve their children in activities in or outside the school. Parents need to reinforce the rules and regulations of the schools; parents also need to observe the progress of their children's education. Parents have to participate in their children's education, as they are ears and eyes for the teachers.

Role of education authorities

The education will not be successful without resources and financial aids. Education authorities must have plans, review curriculum yearly to improve it, make common polices, and support and protect the teachers. Education authorities also organize conferences for teachers, so teachers can improve their method of teaching.

Technologies can be used for teaching aids, e.g. projectors and computers; therefore, education authorities must approve and supply them for the classrooms. A national standards test for 12th grade should be established, not only for states, to bring up the education level for all high school students in the nation. A national standards test for 12th grade will create teaching markets and it will be good for the country. In my point of view, a SAT in the United States is more focused on business purposes than measuring students' knowledge. An accreditation program needs to be performed yearly to avoid complacency. Education authorities must have a vision for the future due to the changing of societies and technologies.

Role of teacher

Teaching is an art, not a job. Everyone can be a teacher, but not everyone can teach. Teaching not only provides knowledge and skills to the students, but it also trains students to be good citizens and future leaders. The role of a teacher is to help students to learn objectives in the teacher's lesson plan.

A teacher is a role model, a mirror for the students; therefore, a teacher's character is very important.

From 4000 BC until today, morals have been a vital element of human beings. People value a person through her or his behavior, not what she or he wears. A teacher's character is in the public eye. When a person chooses to be a teacher, she or he understands that she or he has to give up some of her or his personal lifestyle to help the society and the country. The new generation is in teachers' hands. A Vietnamese proverb

describes that a medical doctor who made a mistake killed only one patient; but a teacher who makes a mistake will kill a generation.

Teachers must have high morals, righteousness, good characters, forgiveness, and public speaking skills. The moral and forgiveness will guide the teacher to success.

Honesty is another characteristic that teachers must have. A teacher needs to admit her or his mistake and a thing she or he does not know. Nobody is perfect! Some teachers lost their students' trust because they did not admit their errors or something they did not know.

A teacher does not need to be an orator, but a teacher needs a skill in public speaking. If a teacher does not have a skill in public speaking, the students in her or his class will lose their attention; they fall asleep and feel that the clock runs too slow.

A teacher also needs to improve his or her knowledge and skills from time to time, to attend seminars, conferences, or get an advanced education. In seminars or conferences, teachers will exchange and gain some experiences from each other. Confucius indicated that when three men walk together, there is always something I can learn (Cheung, 1986, Trans).

A teacher has to create a good atmosphere in the class, always observe students, and encourage them to learn by doing things. A teacher needs to promote students' self start, more activities in class. Teachers need to create win-win (Snelson, 2005) situations and make the lesson fun to learn. Proverbs and storytelling are other methods teachers should use to create interactive learning and guide students to think. Good teachers should know how to combine lectures and interactions. When students discover things by

themselves, they will remember and be happy. A teacher needs to reward the things they do right and guide them to correct the things they do wrong.

Teachers need to understand individual students because each student is unique. Teachers should establish students' simple biography to understand their family background and ethics. When teachers understand students' cultures, teachers can easily train them with compassion and have more chance for success. Teachers must know that each student has a different character, different ways to learn and that each learns at different pace; therefore, teachers must be patient.

The teachers must respect students as human beings, and corporal punishment is not a good way to teach students. However, a punishment will carry out a warning to students who violate the rules and regulations. When a teacher disciplines a student, she or he must be consistent; the teacher must explain exactly what rule the student violated, and correct him or her in loving way, not in anger. A person who gets angry will lose temper and control; and a bad thing may happen.

Teachers must treat students equally, regardless of their economic backgrounds or ethics. Teachers must train students to obtain the same level of knowledge and skills. Teachers should never compare or make a difference between one student and other in public.

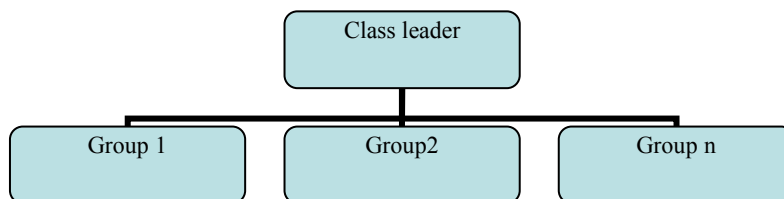
Teachers must be friendly with students to earn their trust, but teachers cannot be a student's friend. A teacher is a student's parent figure. If a teacher is a student's friend, the student thinks that she or he is equal to the teacher and she or he can speak freely with no respect; at this time, the teacher is no longer able to teach effectively.

Today technologies change rapidly and markets are the core business for employment; therefore, teachers must train students' knowledge and skills they need to get a job to support themselves or their family. It will eliminate the welfare, food stamps lifestyle. Government will have good revenue from taxes to develop a defense system to protect the country and other things can improve citizens' life.

A teacher can use the internet as a tool to help students missing class or needing help. Internet instant message is a powerful tool to communicate with students when the weather forces school to close. A teacher always looks for a new way to use the technology to improve the way to teach

Teachers must do a needs assessment regularly, so teachers can help students' improvement in time. Without a needs assessment, a teacher has no way to know that her or his objectives were met. Objectives are dynamic and need to adjust all the time to reflect students' needs or the way societies change. A needs assessment is just a tool to help teachers to measure the goal of teaching and help teachers to improve the lesson plan.

Beside the lecture, a teacher needs to create activities in the class to motivate students' thinking and pro-acting. In my opinion, group study is the most effective way for students to learn. Each class needs to have class leader and students will be divided into groups of five. Each group has a group leader in rotation.



The teacher gives the instructions and objectives to students. Each group discusses the problem, finds a solution, and a group leader presents to the class leader for review, then presents to the class for debate. Teacher trains the class leader in advance. The class leader will join each group and inject his opinion to be sure the group does not go outside the objectives. During the debate period, the class leader is a referee; the teacher must observe and be willing to accept their point of view (a good teacher is a good listener). The teacher guides students to draw the conclusion to meet the objective of the lesson. When students finish a debate, the teacher must debrief them and reward their works.

This model study trains students in leadership style, teamwork, to respect each other, sharing, and to be united; it also eliminates personal competition. I used this model in my mathematic and literature classes and they were successful. Sometimes students teach each other more efficiency than the teacher does. Students will enjoy their class and be proud of their works. Students will enjoy learning more when they discover what they learn and how it connects to the real world.

Modern teachers cannot teach without a curriculum. A successful curriculum needs to develop and be updated regularly.

At the elementary level, three basic courses are need: English, mathematics, and history.

English is the official language for the United States. A bilingual program should be eliminated to save the taxpayers money because when you go to Rome you must do what people in Rome do. English means reading and writing. Reading and writing are the essential tools for life. A person who knows English can travel anywhere in the world.

Studies indicated that eleven million people in the United States were illiterate in English in 1995 (“Study: 11million in US illiterate in English,” 2005). A teacher is a soldier to fight illiteracy’s war. Elementary mathematics (arithmetic) will give students the basic computation skills they must have in this society. History provides the true view of human life; from this view, students will appreciate what they have. Teachers should use history to teach students morals, honesty, and loyalty. History will create a patriot and motivate students to love their country. Besides these courses, students need to learn science, music, geography, and physical education.

At the high school level, four basic courses need to be taught: literature, mathematics, science and history. In literature, students will discover human thinking in many different ways in life, fiction, and non-fiction. Literature can be in many forms: romance, poems, drama, short stories, composition, etc. Advanced mathematics (geometry, trigonometry, algebra, calculus, geometry in space) will teach students higher level thinking about logic and creation. All scientists have good skills in mathematics. Science and technologies are the keys of this generation. Science (physics, chemistry, biology, and psychology) will give students a chance to prove their knowledge of nature based on experiments in their laboratories. Science trains students how to observe things and science’s effect on their life. Advanced history provides students the thinking about how the world is connected and how people react to each other. History will teach students about the past. The present is the result of the past and the present is the basic for the future. By learning the good and the bad things from previous generations, a student has more chance to be a success. A teacher uses history to teach students courage, patriotism, and willingness to serve and protect their country. Students also learn music,

geography, physical education, social studies, foreign languages, etc to balance an education. The technologies are developed and grown rapidly in the United States; therefore, electronics and computer languages need to be taught in high school.

Most the tests in the United States are in multiple choice format; it helps the teacher easily grade the tests, but it also does not reflect exactly what students think. Sometimes students select the wrong answer, but their logic thinking may correct; the teacher has no way to find out and give students partial credit. Some subjects such as literature, mathematics, physics and chemistry should not use multiple choice format. Students need to show their work. Based on their work and their logic thinking, a teacher can evaluate the way to teach, make an adjustment on objectives, and make the education better.

Role of Society

Environment affects and influences children. A good neighborhood rarely has bad children. Most problems parents have to deal with today are the influence of technology, bad movies, and violent games.

When a producer makes a movie, she or he may not think how that film will affect children or family. Most parents have to work to make a living, send their children to someone to take care of them, but the provider's service is not near what parents could do for their children. Children watch everything on TV; they do not know what is right, what is wrong. They learn bad things that stay in their mind. Senator Tom Harkin of Iowa told the *Iowa State Daily* (1995) "Children watch an average of 8,000 murders and

100,000 acts of violence before they finish elementary school. Those images don't go away when you turn off the TV" ("V-chip," 1995, ¶ 5).

If societies can regulate the movie makers, societies will be better and schools should not have many problems. The Telecommunication Act of 1996 mandated all new television models 13 inches or larger manufactured after July 1, 1999, and all sets 13 inches or larger manufactured after January 1, 2000 must have V-Chip technology (FCC, 1998). It did not stop the violent entertainment markets.

The society needs to fight back with movie makers and games makers to bring back the traditional society. A Vietnamese proverb indicated that if you do not dare to go into the tiger's den, how can you catch his cubs! Teachers and communities need to work together to establish an Association to protect children and request that lawmakers submit a legislation to prohibit all violent movies from broadcasting before 9:00PM and strongly punish games suppliers who sell violent games to children under age of 18.

Conclusion

Education starts from the newborn child. School and society produce the quality of education. John Dewey wrote:

I believe that all education proceeds by the participation of the individual in the social consciousness of the race. This process begins unconsciously almost at birth, and is continually shaping the individual's powers, saturating his consciousness, forming his habits, training his ideas, and arousing his feeling and emotions (1897, p.78).

To be a good citizen and leader, a person must follow four steps in Confucius philosophy:

1. Being a role model
2. Managing family
3. Governing country
4. Being a world leader

Teachers must have high morals, honesty, and forgiveness. Students are teacher's customers; therefore, the teacher must treat students in professional way. Children are future leaders of the country. Good family, good school system, especially good teachers, and good society will produce good citizens and exceptional leaders.

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