

Lily's Philosophy of Education

There is no such thing as a neutral educational process. Education either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate the integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity to it, or it becomes the practice of freedom, the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world. – Richard Shaull

I believe education is the practice of freedom. Freedom to discover the world and our relationship with it; freedom to make meaning from our experience as individuals and as communities; and freedom to be actively engaged in creation. To exercise these freedoms consciously and with purpose requires the development of the human capacities for communicative and emancipatory learning.

According to Jurgen Habermas communicative education is where we learn to develop values, resolve conflicts and manage complexity; and emancipatory learning helps us discover the false assumptions that shape our beliefs and our actions. Both of these capacities free us to become conscious participants in the evolutionary process. I believe that to develop this kind of education teachers must partner with students in a process, instead of transmitting static truths.

To experience learning as a dynamic process that responds to change, students and teachers must engage in cycles of knowledge, action and reflection. Knowledge is shared, people reflect on this information within the context of their own experience, and if empowered, act consciously on their new understanding. If this process is shared collectively, the group has the opportunity to utilize a diversity of experience and thought that can produce insights that might not arise on an individual basis. Learning becomes a lifelong process of experience reflected upon and integrated into new learning, a mode that is conscious of the relations between the inner experience and outer realities. This process can provoke an awareness that stimulates the imagination and makes possible a creative transformation of self and world.

My experience with the knowledge/action/reflection cycle has resulted in an ecological worldview. This perspective informs my pedagogy. Together with students I educate myself about the earth, learn to think about the problems we face and how to act on what we discover. This process deepens my understanding of what it means to be human and the essential relatedness that characterizes creation. It is education that is open-ended, generative and transformative. It fosters stewardship, citizenship and a concern for justice. Education as a dialogue makes possible a conscious exploration of self, society and the earth so that its members can become socially responsible actors in a democratic society and excellent ecological citizens. Creating the conditions for and participating in this dialogue is my life work.