

### Assignment 3 Discussion - Dewey's Notion of Experience

Comment on John Dewey's notion of experience (Cahn, pp. 362-363).

I recollect my first experience as a middle school math teacher when I attempted to create these perfect lesson plans with the intention to create fantastic presentations and lectures to provoke students' interest in mathematics. I visualized my students carefully paying attention to every detail that I said and taking notes of every example I wrote on the board, and responding to every question that I asked. There was no doubt in my mind that my dedication, passion, and knowledge of mathematics were going to help my students achieve good grades and love this subject matter like I do. I wanted them to experience mathematics as I did (and still do!) when I was in school.

How inexperienced and naive I was! The classroom experiences taught me hard lessons about the learning process. My lesson plans and delivery instruction were a reflection of my own personal experiences about learning mathematics, which obviously was totally disconnected and different from my students' experiences with this subject matter. As the popular quote says "One man's meat is another man's poison." I had many students who were apathetic or disinterested in what I had to offer since I did not take into account their unique differences and experiences that each of them has. My passionate and energetic teaching style was authoritarian and the flow of the learning process was going only in one direction, teacher to student. The picture that I had of my students it was of a blank cartridge where they could accumulate all the math knowledge I was dispatching to them, so they use this knowledge at a later time in their lives. In other words, my students became just merely passive spectators of the learning process, and many of them found the acquired knowledge meaningless, irrelevant, and useless.

I have no doubt that the experiences that my students are gaining in my classroom could become influential factors for liking or disliking mathematics. After 13 years of teaching experience, confronting and overcoming many problematic situations in my classroom and interacting with my students, where they have learned from me and I have learned from them, valuing their comments, ideas, unique differences, and contributions to the classroom learning experience, I have been gradually moving from being "the sage on the stage" to "guide in the side." However, as one of my colleagues pointed out in this discussion, Dewey's philosophy of experience is a difficult task to incorporate in our classrooms.