

**Critical Reading Analysis #2- On Stir-and-Serve Recipes for Teaching**

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TEL 111: Exploration of Education

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October 24, 2024

## **Critical Reading Analysis #2- On Stir-and-Serve Recipes for Teaching**

This is a critical analysis of the essay "On Stir-and-Serve Recipes for Teaching" by Susan Ohanian from chapter three of the *Educational Foundations: An Anthology of Critical Readings* (4th ed.) textbook. This chapter dives into the complex and misunderstood nature of teaching. Ohanian challenges the belief that anyone can enter a classroom and teach successfully. Ohanian argues that real teaching does not follow a textbook curriculum but requires constant training, dedication, and an understanding of pedagogy (Ohanian, n.d.). The essay critiques teachers' overly practical approach in classrooms for quick and tangible solutions and argues for more profound and reflective practices informed by intellectual growth and personal experience. Additionally, this chapter encourages teachers to embrace the complexity of their work and simplify their curriculum only after experimenting with different approaches. I chose to analyze this chapter because it reveals misconceptions about teaching and advises new educators to deal with challenges creatively. This chapter will impact my future goal of becoming a teacher by understanding the complexities of teaching to help me become a teacher who appreciates continual education and adaptation. The rest of this critical analysis will discuss the main argument that Ohanian is making in the chapter, dive into a selected passage from the chapter, and discuss two reflective questions pulled from the chapter.

### **Main Argument**

The main argument Ohanian is making in this chapter is to make light of the unrealistic expectation that teaching can be reduced to pre-packaged materials, and it urges educators to move away from reliance on methods that offer immediate but superficial results. One key example of this primary argument pulled from the chapter states, "The right teacher-proof curriculum is not sufficient; children need real teachers, and real teachers must be trained" (Ohanian, n.d., p. 73). The teaching profession does not have a course or manual to help future educators navigate every challenge in classrooms and curriculum. Ohanian shares a personal journey about foraging for ideas to engage students, taking courses such as cardboard carpentry and Chinese art, and reading various educational books (Ohanian, n.d.). This argument strives to inform future educators that teaching is a constantly evolving craft and that new teachers need to find their own path and method of education rather than relying on external sources that are copied repeatedly. Additionally, Ohanian's argument touches on the idea that teachers must embrace the complexity of their work, understanding that teachers' adaptable knowledge and skills will often be self-initiated. These arguments tie back to Ohanian challenging the belief that anyone can enter a classroom and teach successfully, rounding out the argument by emphasizing the significance of becoming an educator and disproving the idea that teaching is easy and should be overlooked as a profession.

### **Selected Passage**

The passage that resonated with me from this chapter states, "Most of us, children and adults alike, have a strong need to make sense of the disparate elements in our lives, to bring them together, to find patterns, to make meaning. This desire for meaning is so strong that some teachers, tired and defeated by the system, rely on ritual to get them through the day, the week,

the year” (Ohanian, n.d., p. 76). I selected this passage because it highlights a universal human need- the desire to find meaning and patterns in life- and it applies it to the experience of teaching. This passage speaks about the emotional and psychological challenges of working in a system that often prioritizes structure and ritual over personal fulfillment and creativity. I feel that the college environment is very much like this passage, and my future work environment may be the same, where teachers feel burned out and unsupported, to the point where they lose sight of their higher purpose when it comes to teaching (which is to make meaningful connections with students). This message impacts me because it shows the tension between meaning and the constraints of the educational system. As a future educator, I might, at some point, experience repetitive tasks or low support that may make me lose sight of the greater purpose of education, which is to foster understanding, growth, and creativity for students. Although this isn’t what educators should strive to experience, it is the reality in most cases, and it is impactful because learning about these hardships has helped me think of strategies I should put in place to deal with stress and to put together a meaningful objective that will be the foundation in my future classroom.

### **Reflective Questions**

Throughout the chapter, Ohanian centers on the emotional well-being of teachers and their struggle to find meaning in their work (Ohanian, n.d.), wondering what happens to teachers when they are so overwhelmed by the pressures of the system, leading them to resort to repetitive rituals and teaching methods. This question piqued interest and is important because it speaks to the overbearing focus on strict curriculum and standardized testing. It has drained the passion and energy that once fueled a teacher’s creativity. Ohanian’s question led to a personal

inquiry: how can first-year teachers find a sense of purpose and creativity when the system has a rigid structure? This discussion is meaningful because new teachers don't usually have the support system from colleagues as a teacher who has been teaching for 10+ years would. This imbalance suggests that new teachers resort to repetitive teaching methods because of burnout and a loss of meaningful teacher-student relationships.

### Reference

Ohanian, S. (n.d.). On Stir-and-Serve Recipes for Teaching. In A.S. Canestrari & B.A. Marlowe (Eds.). *Educational foundations: An anthology of critical readings* (4th ed.). (pp 73-80). Sage Publications.