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EDU 519 SP 08 HUMAN DEVELOPMENT AND LEARNING

Reflection #1

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Module 1 Educational Psychology for Teachers

Module 2 Development: Some General Principles

Module 3 Piaget's Theory of Cognitive Development

Module 4 Vygotsky's Sociocultural Perspective

Module 5 Implications of Piaget and Vygotsky for Teachers

Module 12 Diversity in Today's Classroom

The textbook we are using for the course, *Human Development and Learning*, provides some interesting topics for reflection. As discussed in Module 1, the *No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act* (Woolfolk, 2008, p. 2) is examined. I have never actually asked myself the question, “How does this act personally affect me?” The answer to this question is that this act profoundly affects every aspect of the career I plan to pursue as a teacher. This act establishes guidelines I must follow regarding decisions I will make as a teacher, relationships I will establish as a teacher and conversations I will hold with students, parents and peers. I must constantly be aware of and concerned with the welfare and well being of all children, both academically and emotionally.

The text also brings to mind the question, “Have I had any teachers who have greatly impacted my own life?” This question fondly brings to mind my undergraduate college advisor, Dr. Monica Lindeman. She is one educator whose dedication to the development of a positive teacher-student relationship has greatly impacted my life. The text refers to how a positive teacher-student relationship in a student’s primary years can account for school success. The teacher-student relationship shared by Dr. Lindeman and I began in 1981 and has blossomed into friendship lasting over 27 years! Even though this relationship did not begin in my primary years, I attribute much of my professional success as an adult to Dr. Lindeman’s qualities as an educator. To put it bluntly, she is an amazing lady!

While reading Module 1 of the text, I was also reminded of how much I personally gained as the result another positive teacher-student relationship experience. I completely agree with the statement referenced in the text which says, “Good teaching is not confined to the classroom.”

(Woolfolk, 2008, p. 5). This experience occurred recently during my initial interview for acceptance into the program which will lead to becoming a certified teacher. For this I wish to say, “Thank you, Mrs. Wooten,” for using your professional skills, training and advice to aide me in determining that Social Studies would be the appropriate area of concentration for me. Your keen insight while advising students reflects the quality you possess as an expert educator and advisor. The personal discussion we shared during my interview process included my personal travels and enjoyment of history. I would “loosely” refer to our conversation as the “action research” necessary to perform a “single-subject experiment” (Woolfolk, 2008, p. 17).

The example mentioned above is a compliment! However, you may be asking yourself, “What does she mean by this example and how does it fit into a reflection of this text?” Mrs. Wooten, if you had not taken the time and shown an interest in me I would not have pursued certification in an area which now seems I am most suited for based on my personal interests and desires. I am thankful for the time you did take to work with me to reach the determination that Social Studies is the most logical and efficient path to take on my road to becoming a good teacher. The text refers to this as an example of an experienced teacher, in that they are concerned with the “professional growth and effectiveness” of their students (Woolfolk, 2008, p. 17).

Module 2 of the text provided a great deal of information about the general principles of development. As a person matures their development can be broken down into several areas: “physical development, personal development, social development and cognitive development” (Woolfolk, 2008, p. 24). My role as a mother provides me a basis for understanding how these areas play a role in a person’s maturity. I have never taken the time to actually read about the

complexity of the brain's role in development. Words such as "neurons, synapses, plasticity, myelination, and lateralization" (Woolfolk, 2008, pp. 25-27) absolutely send my head spinning! Clarification using simpler terms of how the brain develops would greatly be appreciated.

I really enjoyed reading about Piaget's Theory of Cognitive Development (Woolfolk, 2008, pp. 36-49). Graphic and visual organizers are a strategy which can be implemented to assist students with drawing conclusions; however, how this strategy is used would vary at the four levels of cognitive development. Vygotsky's Sociocultural Perspective also provided for interesting reading. If Vygotsky's belief, "that language in the form of private speech (talking to yourself) guides cognitive development" (Woolfolk, 2008, p. 53), is true; how can it be a "misconception that young children learn a second language faster than adolescents or adults (Woolfolk, 2008, p. 31)? I have observed the ability of young children to learn a second language faster than their parents, and I tend to believe it is because they do "talk to themselves" when repeating what they have heard adults say. When applied to teaching, it seems that "scaffolding" and "assisted learning" (Woolfolk, 2008, pp. 63-65) should be applied. Scaffolding breaks down learning into steps, while assisted learning provides the method. The goal is to ultimately have students become independent learners.

The word "multicultural education" (Woolfolk, 2008, p. 177) mentioned in Module 12 is also extremely interesting. I attended Department of Defense (D.O.D.) schools while growing up overseas. I was exposed to this type of learning environment prior to ever having heard the words, "melting pot or multiculturalism" (Woolfolk, 2008, pp. 176-177). I believe that exposure to various cultures promotes acceptance, understanding and interaction with these

various cultures. As a teacher candidate, I believe that my exposure to other cultures while growing up in Panama and Germany will be an asset. The Department of Defense School System is a melting pot when it comes to ethnicity, race, socioeconomic status and academic achievement. Was I ever sorry that because of my father's job I had to attend these schools and live overseas while growing up?

I lived in Frankfurt, Germany from age 11 to 14 and was not too happy about it at the time. What up set me the most? We were limited to one TV channel in English; we had limited access to fashionable clothing; and we were forced to learn German in school. These statements may sound silly now; however, as a middle school student, I surely did not see any reason why I had to learn to speak German because I attended an American school! Aging has a way of changing our perspective of what is important in life. I am now extremely appreciative of the opportunity I was provided to live in an environment which promoted the education of ethnic differences. The school also enrolled many students of various race and socioeconomic status. If the student's grades had solely been based on their ability to get along with others, I presume that this D.OD. school could maintain that their educational environment produced many students of high academic achievement.

In conclusion, my life experience in conjunction with the study of these theories and strategies will prepare me in my quest to be an educator.

Reference:

Woolfolk, A. (2008). Module 1 (pp. 1-21). Module 2 (pp. 22-35). Module 3 (pp. 36-49). Module 4 (pp. 50-58). Module 5 (pp. 59-69). Module 12 (pp. 176-191). *Educational Psychology Active Learning Edition*, 10/E (10th Ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.