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EDU 519 SP 08 HUMAN DEVELOPMENT AND LEARNING

Reflection #2

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Module 9 Individual Differences

Module 10 Integration and Inclusion: Teaching Every Child

Module 11 Ability Differences and Teaching

Module 13 Girls and Boys: Differences in the Classroom

Module 14 Creating Culturally Compatible Classrooms

The “Stop|Think|Write|” activity “Write down a name and the first 4-5 words that come to mind when you see that person in your mind’s eye.” (Woolfolk, 2008, p. 123) is an absolutely wonderful example of how people’s opinion and interpretation of the word “intelligence” may differ. The words that I may choose to describe a person will most likely differ from the words that another person may choose. The most intelligent person I have ever known is my father, and the words that describe him are: logical, practical, well-read, educated, and intellectual. What I find most amazing is that my father was an average student whose mother motivated and paid for him to go to college, even at the discouragement of his high school guidance counselor. He obtained his degree in Electrical Engineering and a second degree in Mathematics. He retired with more than 30 years of service from the Central Intelligence Agency, was bestowed a Merit Award, and was responsible for many covert operations which I know protected the National Security of the United States. Yes, all of this even though he had one educator who did not believe in him, but a parent who did! I am fortunate that my father has bestowed upon me this same level of encouragement and has always believed in me.

The example provided above would fall under “Emotional Intelligence” as provided in Gardner’s Multiple Intelligence Theory. ((Woolfolk, 2008, p. 128). My father’s intrapersonal intelligence was fostered by his mother’s continued encouragement and support. He was able to look within himself to find the desire and self-motivation needed to become successful. I also believe that the level of support and encouragement my father has always shown me is responsible for my high level of self-motivation and self-discipline. The text examines the question of whether intelligence is a result of heredity or environment. I agree with the conclusion which states, “Today, most psychologists believe that differences in intelligence are

the result of both heredity and environment, probably in about equal proportions for children.” (Woolfolk, 2008, p. 133). If I am to be an effective teacher, I must continually model the positive behavior I have learned from my father; I will encourage students to learn to believe in themselves.

The question of how various intelligences are handled to today’s classroom seems to be an issue which every teacher will face. I have had very little experience working with children who have an “Individualized Education Program, or IEP.” (Woolfolk, 2008, p. 138) and have special needs. Until I read this text, I had assumed people simply had a certain level of “general intelligence” (Woolfolk, 2008, p. 124) which was made up of multiple levels of intelligence.

My theory is that this one general level of intelligence varies due to a person’s innate ability to comprehend and perform a given task; however their general intelligence could increase over time. The level of interest, time and effort they personally take to develop specific areas of intelligence could and most likely will result in an increased level of general intelligence. I believe my theory of intelligence is a combination of both Spearman’s “general intelligence” and Gardner’s “theory of multiple intelligences” (Woolfolk, 2008, pp. 124-126). After reading how the various legislations, such as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, impact teachers I have broadened my understanding of the terms “disability and handicap.” When in a teaching situation with children of special needs, I need to be able to recognize the difference between an “inability to do something specific like see or walk” and a

person's "disadvantage in certain situations" when asked to perform a task such as reading. (Woolfolk, 2008, pp. 123-138).

When teaching children who have an IEP it is required that they are taught in the "least restrictive environment." (Woolfolk, 2008, p. 139). The question as to which environment will work best for all students seems to be an issue of contention. It also appears that not one particular environment will work well for all. The teacher's attitude towards learning in any environment is very important. It is important that the teacher attempt to structure their classroom practices to meet the needs of the entire classroom setting. Whether teaching in a classroom composed of strictly low-ability students, gifted students or a combination of both, as well as average students, the teacher is responsible for providing instruction which will stimulate a student's desire to learn. This is a tough job! I used to think selling insurance was tough because I sold an intangible product; however, a child's education is an intangible product which produces tangible results. The results of a child's education are far more valuable to the well-being of society than any insurance product I ever sold.

I further believe it is important for a person to learn to take responsibility for their own actions and to conform to social norms, because society will not conform to you. Self-motivation and self-discipline are important factors to teach students. The decisions and actions made once a student reaches adulthood will either help or harm the well-being of society. There has always been controversy regarding the way men and women think and learn. In the classroom a teacher needs to recognize these differences and encourage both genders to excel in all areas of curriculum. This same line of thought should be applied when

instructing a classroom of culturally diverse students. I agree with the text regarding the fact that schools often foster gender biases (Woolfolk, 2008, pp. 195-195) and believe that in some cases schools also foster cultural biases.

As a student in the late 1960's and early 1970's I remember reading textbooks which "portrayed both males and females in stereotyped roles." (Woolfolk, 2008, p. 196). If I were able to teach in a "culturally inclusive classroom," which are designed to "eliminate racism, sexism, classism and prejudice" (Woolfolk, 2008, p. 207), I would utilize textbooks and reading assignments that examine, explain and promote acceptance of diversity. I had mentioned above that I believe it is important to conform to social norms, however I might add that I also believe it is important to have an open mind regarding the way these norms change over time. I believe it is importance to learn to accept people as they are, and to learn from our diversities.

In conclusion, I have learned a lot from the text. As opportunities present themselves while I am working as a substitute teacher, I will be better prepared to adjust my thinking towards instruction methods which address differences in: individual learning needs, gender roles and cultural roles.

Reference:

Woolfolk, A. (2008). Module 9 (pp. 122-137). Module 10 (pp. 138-160). Module 11 (pp. 161-173). Module 13 (pp. 192-200). Module 14 (pp. 201-219). *Educational Psychology Active Learning Edition*, 10/E (10th Ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.