Midterm Essay

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EDUC 5302 – Educational Psyc & Learning Theory

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**Introduction**

Throughout the first half of our Educational Psyc class, we have discussed a lot about different classroom scenarios as well as how to handle different situations. I think that a few of the most interesting and most important topics we have covered are the different teaching approaches, learning preferences, and cooperative learning strategies. These are so interesting to me because even though my goal is to become a coach, I know that the likelihood of me having to teach is also very high. When I finally do become a teacher, I want to have the knowledge needed to make an impact on my students and be able to provide them the knowledge and the right tools to learn.

**Question 1**

**Bullet #1**

Trips teacher needs to give him a concrete picture of fractions, such as a pie chart or a line graph. In order to move to abstract thinking, he first needs to see fractions concretely and be able to manipulate them himself. In the early grades, students are moving toward the logical system of thought. In the middle grades, students are ready to apply and be extended by our teaching (Woolfolk, 2013). Trip is ready to apply this thinking, he just needs a teachers guidance to help him transition.

The classroom teacher should be using scaffolding as a teaching approach. Students should never be left behind in learning. Students need active experience with this new information meaning they need to act, manipulate, or observe on new information however needed to fit into their own scheme (Woolfolk, 2013). Trips teacher needs to adapt the learning material to the student’s current level of development in order for them to move from concrete to abstract thinking.

If I were Trip’s teacher, I would take a step back and try to understand where he is personally with the lesson and then try to build off the knowledge that the already has. I would give him manipulative’s in order to get hands on practice with fractions, that way he can master the concept concretely and thus move forward into thinking abstractly about fractions.

**Bullet #2**

Since Trip is a concrete thinker when it comes to mathematics, there is always the possibility of him being a concrete thinker when it comes to other subjects as well. However, there is always the chance that he will be an abstract thinker in certain subjects as well. One of Vygotsky’s key ideas was that human’s mental structures and processes could be shaped and molded by our interactions with others (Woolfolk, 2013). If this theory were correct, then whether or not Trip thinks concretely or abstractly would have a lot to do with who is teacher for that specific subject. Piaget believes that teachers must be able to determine how their student thinks and processes information, as well as observe students and determine the most efficient way to teach them (Woolfolk, 2013). Likewise, students can think at multiple levels at the same time including abstract and concrete thinking. An example of using multiple learning methods at one time would be reading *Alice in Wonderland*, or any other myths and fairy tales. These types of stories are used at a concrete and symbolic level (Woolfolk, 2013). If a child can use concrete and symbolic at the same time, then there is no reason that Trip cannot think concretely in mathematics as well as abstractly in a different subject.

**Question 5**

**Bullet 1**

I firmly believe that the use of social negotiation and shared responsibility will help Mr. Butler create a cohesive group among the students in his chemistry class. Social negotiation allows students to learn and defend their own positions as well as letting the students respect the opinions of others. Through this they are learning to communicate, co-construct meaning, or negotiate (Woolfolk, 2013). Because Mr. Butler is a proponent of the constructivist theory, the way he teaches will allow him to enable the students who are strong in chemistry to restructure their current knowledge and gain even more knowledge. Likewise, for the students who are not so strong in chemistry, it will allow them to participate in problem-based activities in the group setting (Woolfolk, 2013).

**Bullet 2**

Cooperation is a way for people to come together and achieve a common goal (Woolfolk, 2013). When students engage in cooperative learning, they are learning how to collaborate with one another. Cooperative learning is students working together with a shared learning goal and jointly assigned projects (Woolfolk, 2013). The students are adopting an intersubjective attitude by building a shared meaning by finding a common ground. These students can overcome diversity in their science class because they have to communicate with one another and learn from each other’s knowledge base. They are having to explain, elaborate, and interpret what they already know. They are learning that each person in the class has valuable knowledge to share. As students are learning cooperatively, they are organizing their knowledge, making connections, and reviewing all at the same time (Woolfolk, 2013). This begins to eliminate diversity because students with both strong and weak backgrounds are both starting to go beyond their current knowledge level.

**Bullet 3**

If I were Mr. Hutch, I would let the students know that they needed to quiet down, but at the same time, still work together in groups. I would also let the other classroom teacher know that I had to intention of having my students being loud, but rather I wanted to put them in situations in which they learn best. Students have different learning styles and preferences; therefore I as their teacher would feel the need to make sure I meet the learning needs for each student (Woolfolk, 2013). I would figure out a way to come to an agreement with the other teacher that would make it possible for my students to still have their group time, but at the same time not bother the other class. Ms. Beck also has responsibility to her students to teach them in the way that they learn best, and if my class is distracting them, then I am taking away from their learning, therefore I am not doing my job as a teacher.

**Conclusion**

How a teacher handles the classroom setting is a very important part of teaching. These questions are great examples on how to handle problems in the classroom. I can only hope that when I am a teacher and a coach, that I handle difficult situations in a good manner. I have had many teachers that just did not seem to care how the students learn or even if they did learn. I want to make sure that I provide the best learning environment possible for my students.

**Appendix A**

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| **Categories** | **Points Possible** | **Self-Evaluation** | **Instrutor**  **Evaluation** |
| APA formatting / Grammar / Punctuation / Usage / Spelling | **15** | **13** |  |
| Quality, depth, and support for the first response | **35** | **29** |  |
| Quality, depth, and support for the second response | **35** | **28** |  |
| Introduction, conclusion and evidence of personal insight and/or learning | **15** | **13** |  |
| **Total Points** | **100** | **83** |  |
| **Average of the two scores:** | | | |

**Sources**

Hoy, A. W. (2013). Educational psychology (13th ed.). Pearson.