Redefining the Paradigm

Equity begins with Pedagogy

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Abstract: This paper explores problems associated with viewing students under the guise of deficiency theories and suggests alternative approaches.

Introduction

In terms of Anthropology and Education the diversities of theory run wide. Deficit Theories, however, have dominated our historical realities. The Cultural Deficit Theory followed on the heels of the Genetic Deficit Theory, and Darwinian concepts of evolution; a system of thought that had gained wide acceptance and controversy during the early 1900's. But where Darwin found genetic differentiations of animal species based upon geographical or environmental adaptation, Genetic Deficit Theorists had expanded that idea to include social and cultural systems of people. This one system of belief has resulted in a historical pattern of testing and legal actions geared towards fixing the deficient student rather than considering that there might be faults in the perspective of the academic structure itself. A number of Deficit theories soon made their way into the mainstream educational system that remedied the situations of these poor, deficient students and little was done to look at the inequities in social and political aspects; in other words, the blame remained conveniently elsewhere. (Davidson, 1992)
In 1982 Shirley Brice Heath's study of three populations in the Piedmont Carolinas area brought to light the components of micro-communication differences. Some differences included cultural and socio-linguistic variabilities. Most importantly, her study prompted educators to modify teaching methods in order to accommodate the different "ways with words" and understandings. Teachers, parents and students involved admitted that they had gained insights from the process of sharing information across groups. Here is the thrust of micro-ethnographic techniques or looking to the student for answers.

One of the new perspectives that came out of this trend was the idea of Multiple Intelligences. Psychologist Howard Gardner (1983) identified the following distinct types of intelligence: Linguistic, Logical-Mathematical, Bodily-kinesthetic, Spatial, Musical, Interpersonal, Intrapersonal, (http://www.ed.psu.edu/dept/ae-insys-wfed/insys/esd/Gardner). Gardner claimed that children can attain academic intelligence in any of these areas and that they are skills-specific to many of the academic careers that we value. For instance, surgeons need precise spatial skills in order to perform surgery. Without it, they would not be able to do the specialized types of operations that save many, many lives. With this in mind, teachers can not only begin receiving training in cultivating these areas, but they can also see children in a more positive light; they can focus on these other aspects of skill, as well as, those areas in need of improvement. As many of the students in Nieto's (2000) case studies show, most students seem to need and want high challenges in school. Why not challenge all students regardless of skills level? This is where my interview focused.

Krystle is a 7th grader who attends Friere Middle School. She is Mixed from a mixed Irish and Chinese ethnic background, but considers herself all American. Her parents have been in the states for more than one generation and don't seem to feel any affiliation with any one culture, except maybe that of lower middle class. I asked Krystle a series of questions pertaining to her classes and the types of lessons she enjoyed most to try and decipher what she valued most.

Right off the bat, Krystle indicated that she used to be in a reading program and she "hated it." When I asked why, she said it was "boring and she didn't learn anything." She told me they mostly worked on a computer program for reading and there...
didn't seem to be much teacher interaction at all. Later, however, she told me the school had changed the program and her class changed to something called “Reading Circles.” She said it was “more fun” because all the students were able to take turns picking out a new book each week and then all of them took turns reading every day. When I asked her if she felt it helped her reading, she said she began to get books at home more and even read to her Mom and little brother more.

I also asked Krystle what else she enjoyed about school and she said her history class was really “cool.” She said they sometimes did play acting and were able to be different people like Harriet Tubman or Abraham Lincoln and act out certain scenes in history. She said they even performed one time for her class. She said she got to be one of people who helped named “Ms. Coffin.” She also said she “learned that there were a lot of people like that who helped and there were good and bad things that happened, but some people made a difference.”

Krystle talked about much more, but just in these two situations, it seems that the most enjoyable experiences for Krystle revolved around a teacher who considered different learning styles in the classroom. The activities were highly diverse and active which contributed to more engagement by students. This also directly supports Freire’s ideas in terms of co-creating knowledge in the classroom. (Lecture, 10/08/02) Krystle definitely seemed to favor those classes that were more interactive which and personal which may indicate that she is geared towards a “Bodily-kinesthetic” learning style. Whether the school figured that out and placed her accordingly is not clear. What is clear is that she really responded to the adjustment. And even though Krystle was put into a remedial reading group, she didn’t mind when the activities were more challenging. (K. O’Brien, personal communication, November 5, 2002)

In conclusion, I think researcher’s are on the right path in terms of bringing to light more research on helping all students attain some form of academic and mental acuity, regardless of surface or labeled ability. In theoretical terms, this means exploring the possibilities and answers further. The Multiple Intelligence Theory is not only a new perspective on the idea that some people are “less than,” but it gives us a new direction in which to focus and progress. One that echoes more the idea that all children, regardless of background, are not deficient, but equally talented individuals with different types of abilities to share and cultivate — no matter what.
Sample Reference Page


Remember...

On Citations...

1. Put 1st citations where applicable (Bolima, 2000)

2. If using the same source in the same paragraph put page numbers (pp.23-24)

3. In a new paragraph recite source (Bolima, 2000)

4. Always put citations after summarizing or referring to a source.

5. Always back up your claims with outside references.

6. If using a class lecture put (Lecture, 11/6/00)

7. If summarizing family comments or a person put (name, personal communication, 11/3/00) Does not go in reference list.

8. Put "quotes" around any directly copied material.


10. Do not directly quote more than six lines of material or you need to indent.
Sample Formats

P, C, E, S Format
- Define a Problem
- Causes or Reasons
- Effects of the Problem
- Solution

Descriptive/Expository
- Describe a Theory that is useful
- Supportive Detail and or Examples of Theory in Action
- Conclusion

Comparison/Contrast
- Intro
- Compares/Contrasts two or more Theories
- Conclusion

Argumentative
- Presents a Claim you will Argue against or for
- Argument Against or for
- Concluding Arguments

The Abyss Theory: Theory on Cognitive Processing
(or how we write)

Subconscious/Conscious Thought

The Abyss (our minds)
Our ideas are refined in our mind's abyss each time we do a new draft. This is the natural process of writing...

Disjointed Ideas (Free Write)

More Focused Ideas (Rough Draft)

Revision of Ideas (Revision of Rough Draft)

Finished Processing Ideas (Final Draft)

Interview
- Description of Interviewee
- Summary of Interviewee Answers/Topics
- Presents a Theory you think applies
- Conclusions
## FINAL PROJECT GUIDES
1. Signed Permissions form
2. At least 5 Pages
3. Reference page
4. APA Format
5. At least one outside reference (own research source)
6. At least one class reference (can be any theory, concept etc...)
7. Topic related to concepts from Anthropology & Education
8. An interview related to your topic

## SAMPLE QUESTIONS FOR SAMPLE PAPER
**THEORIES USED: DEFICIT THEORY & MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCES**
1. What is your cultural background?
2. Were you born here?
3. Where Mom and Dad or your guardians born here?
4. Do you enjoy school? Why or why not?
5. What is or has been your favorite class in school and why?
6. What types of activities do you do that you enjoy?
7. What is or has been your worst class and why?
8. What types of activities did you do that you did not like?
9. Who are your favorite teachers and why?
10. What do they do that you like?
11. What have you learned from the classes you like the most?
12. Is there anything else you can tell me about school or what you like or don't like about it?