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CEP 800

### Final Reflective Essay

The main learning that took place as a part of this course was about the various learning theories that were discussed in the articles or the Phillips and Soltis book. The ideas covered in the theories were not completely new to me, but I did learn more specific information about them, and the originators of these theories were made known to me. Other than learning details about the many theories of learning, I was introduced to some resources I could use in teaching, such as the simulations website and the online museums, an alternative program for professional development that is used in Japan, and I experienced the importance of allowing discussion in class.

As any teacher will explain, finding good resources is an important aspect of teaching. Every teacher steals, or put in more politically correct terms borrows, worksheets, labs, and other resource materials that other teachers have developed. The website simulations developed by the University of Colorado at Boulder can be used to supplement lectures by presenting a simulation in order to appeal to the students that are visual learners, or they could be used as labs that would be performed in class or as homework. The simulations from this website will be very easy to use in the classroom, so I really appreciate being introduced to this website through this course. This knowledge was gained through experience. I actively engaged in the simulations as a part of Module 2 Task 3, which aided in the development of a schema of how the simulations could be used in the classroom. I also can use the resource of an online museum, such as the Field Museum website that I explored as a part of Module 6 Task 2. The online museums could be used as a part of a lecture, like the University of Colorado website, or as an assignment to be used to spark the student's interest. Like the website, I gained this knowledge through experience with exploring the online museums and all they have to offer to a classroom teacher. I believe that Piaget's theory about the importance of the learner being actively involved in the process of attaining knowledge was one of the most influential contributions to modern theories of teaching. Before Piaget, theorists believed the learner to be a passive participant. Piaget's theory of creating action schemata and Dewey's ideas about social constructivism were the two theories that seemed to be the most applicable to student learning in a modern classroom.

Another piece of knowledge that I gained through this course is the alternative professional development system that Japan uses. The system involves teachers watching a colleague's lesson and discussing any observations or thoughts they had about the interaction between student and teacher, or any comments on the behavior of the students or the teacher. This high level of collaboration between teachers seems like it would be an enormous asset to the development of teachers. I cannot think of better sources of insight into the happenings of the classrooms at my school than the other teachers that teach there. Teachers cannot see everything that is taking place in the classroom at all times, so it would benefit every teacher to have some extra eyes to observe what the classroom teacher did not see. This information about a seemingly more effective method of professional development could be passed along to my colleagues, and we could

approach the administration about setting up some time to observe each other's classes and to have time to discuss our observations in order to correct any ineffective practices or to give advice about valuable management techniques that could be used. If the administration did not want to provide official professional development time for this system, I could ask some of my colleagues to observe my class during their planning period so that I could receive any guidance they may have for me. I gained this knowledge by reading an article by Lewis and Tsuchida who seem to be interested in furthering the education of teachers. Since this knowledge was gained by the sharing of ideas between individuals, I would consider the knowledge to have been gained through social construction. I believe that this theory of learning is the most applicable to all learning that takes place in a student's life. Learning does not need to occur solely in the classroom; there are many learning opportunities outside of the classroom as well.

Social constructivism is one the learning theories that makes the most sense to me and seems to be the most prevalent in and out the classrooms today. This class has shown me the importance of allowing discussion in the classroom. I need to develop good thought-provoking questions to propose to the class in order to stimulate class discussions that will help the students to learn the concepts at a higher level. Providing the time for students to debate about controversial topics would facilitate an increase in their ability to critically think and allow them to socially construct their knowledge. Since this class seemed to be designed to socially construct knowledge, the discussions regarding the postings by the members of our groups was an important aspect of knowledge acquisition in this course. The diversity of experiences and professions of the people in the groups made the discussions interesting and valuable to learning about the theories proposed in the reading assignments. I found the class to be especially effective when you provided your ideas about the topics being discussed. I think that my learning would have been benefited if there were more comments made about the discussions that were happening in the groups. I was not really sure if my interpretations of the material or the responses by the other members of my group were valid, so it would have been helpful to have more input from you about the learning theories being discussed in each module. Overall, I found the socially constructed knowledge that was gained through group discussions to be a useful method of learning.

The knowledge I gained in this course was acquired through two primary methods, which are actively creating schemata and social constructivism. The resources of the University of Colorado Boulder website and the online museums will provide useful supplements to lecture about abstract concepts. These resources could help motivate students to learn the material. The two ways in which socially constructed knowledge will be beneficial to me is the possible incorporation of the Japanese professional development system into my classroom and the realization of the importance of stimulating classroom discussions. The collaboration between teachers in the same school that is a part of the Japanese professional development program would be especially helpful for a new teacher like me. The other method of socially constructed knowledge acquisition that I gained from this course is the incorporation of debatable topics into classroom discussions, which would provide the students with opportunities to develop

good critical thinking skills. As a whole, this course has been helpful in increasing my understanding of how students learn in and out of the classroom.