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EDU 539 Methods of Teaching Subject Area (Social Studies)

Reflection 1

The first question which I had to ask myself after reading the first part of the book, *Classroom Instruction that Works*, was “What is an effective teacher?” I believe an effective teacher is a person who is able guide and teach a person the academic and social skills necessary to prepare them for the future. I also believe to be an effective teacher; a person must possess the aptitude and desire to work with others. An effective teacher promotes an optimistic and inspirational learning environment that encourages reflective and dedicated personal growth.

The first chapter stated that prior to about 1970 “teaching had not been systematically studied in a scientific manner.” (Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2004, p. 1). It was further explained that, this did not mean that “effective teaching strategies were absent before 1970.” (Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2004, p. 1). This chapter explained that beginning in the 1970’s researchers began to study “the effects of instruction on student learning.” (Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2004, p. 1). In some ways this reminded me of the Theory of Cause and Effect; the level of teaching instruction has a direct bearing on the results of the student learning. Once I read further, I came to understand why in preparing to become a teacher I am required to take classes that do more than simply prepare me to teach academic instruction. For example, I need to study Educational Psychology to learn how to effectively provide instruction that will enhance the learning environment for students of various race, ethnicity and socioeconomic status.

This text also addressed current attitudes regarding educational research and instructional techniques. The prevailing attitude is that it takes a combination of various research studies to determine what are the best techniques or strategies for instruction. I believe this is a positive way to look at things and will compare this to our class. Our classroom is composed of persons with varying levels of life experience and teaching experience. The opportunity to learn from the combined experiences of various people is extremely helpful and provides a good foundation upon which to build teaching skills.

The classroom instruction, demonstration and practice of various graphic organizers were an extremely helpful method of relating classroom practice to what I had read in the text. I found it very useful to actually create the KWL and Venn Diagram as part of our own classroom practice. This activity helped me personally, and now I am able to understand how it helps students organize their thoughts prior to, during and after classroom instruction. I agree that these types of strategies are wonderful tools for teachers to use in classroom instruction when helping students learn to compare and classify things. I also believe that these organizational tools can also be used by students when they prepare to study for a test.

I have always known that no two people are alike, and I do not believe that one standardized set of instructional techniques work for all. Two teachers with completely different ideas of what is an effective technique can still both be effective teachers. No two students are alike; therefore, teachers need to learn and implement various teaching strategies. It is important to understand that instructional techniques which work well for one student, may not work well for another. This is why differentiating instruction is an important element of teaching effectively.

In conclusion, I am really learning a lot about areas of teaching I was never before aware of. With 20 years as an insurance professional, I never would have understood what a person meant if they said, "Teaching is a science." I might now compare teaching to a motto I used in the sale of individual health insurance. The motto for my business was, "I Sell Health Insurance Designed to Meet Your Specific Needs." As a teacher I would revise this to say, "I Teach in a Manner Designed to Meet Your Specific Needs." This is a great choice of text and it is laid out in a way which provides examples that can easily be implemented in classroom instruction!

Reference:

Marzano, R. J., Pickering, D. J., & Pollock, J. E. (2004). *Classroom Instruction that Works*. United States: ASCD.