Developing a Teacher's Disposition Toward Inquiry: How DIR® Supports Teacher Education and Development

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Today's Presentation

- Discuss the need for a conceptual shift in teacher education and professional development based on the complex profiles of children with ASD.

- Discuss the possibility of provoking dissonance with the introduction of a new lens for looking at children with ASD.

- Review a proposed stage theory for teacher development based on affective and motivational aspects of teachers' self-systems that influence their interaction with all students, but particularly those who offer new and unique challenges.

- Review recommendations for supporting teachers through this conceptual shift and expanded lens.

- At this time Mr. C.(teacher) came over and joined us. Mr. C. and Ms. W.(paraprofessional) watched as I attempted to engage Adam with the play doh. From watching how much Adam loved the feel of the play doh on his face, Mr. C. suggested that perhaps we add something else that might feel cool on his face and handed me a cold bottle of milk from the classroom refrigerator. I took it and gently placed it against Adam's cheek and then removed it. I waited for Adam to initiate that he wanted this again. He took my hand and the milk and pulled it toward his cheek. I held back a bit and waited for Adam to look at me to direct his communication or request to me. He did. Mr. C. needed to go back to the rest of the class and begin a math lesson on measurement.

- As Ms. W. and I stayed with Adam on the floor she asked me if *what I was doing was education.* In comparison to the lesson going on at the table, my attempts to help Adam engage with me looked very different. I explained how helping Adam find a way to calm his body, helping him to take in information from the world around him, as well as helping him to initiate an interaction were all foundations for future learning. We also need to help him to be able to represent his thoughts, ideas and desires in ways that others can understand him (perhaps using photos or picture symbols) so that he does not have to become so frustrated. His aspirations to let others know that he wants something outweigh his ability to do so. He needs the support of adults. Without this foundation, the core developmental levels, more academic lessons will not have meaning for Adam.

So what is self-regulation?

Stuart Shanker
Calm, Alert, and Learning
Classroom Strategies for Self-Regulation
(2013)
Pearson Canada Inc, Toronto, Ontario

- The ability to:
  - Attain, maintain and change one's level of energy to match demands of a task or situation
  - Monitor, evaluate, and modify one's emotions
  - Sustain and shift one's attention when necessary & ignore distractions
  - Understand both the meaning of a variety of social interactions and how to engage in them in a sustained way
  - Connect with and care about what others are thinking and feeling – to empathize and act accordingly

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Why are we talking about self-regulation?

- Scientific research indicates that how well students do in school can be determined by how well they are able to self-regulate.

- Some researchers believe that self-regulation should now be considered a more important indicator of educational performance than IQ.

- Blair & Diamon, 2008; Duckworth & Seligman, 2005; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000.

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Two Kinds of Functional Analysis of Behavior

Behavior = function of consequences

- Linear
- Isolated
- Impersonal
- Behavior-centered

Behavior = function of biological, psychological and social factors (consequences)

- Multivariable
- Integrated
- Relationship-based
- Person-centered

Gerard Costa, Ph.D. 2012

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Need for a Conceptual Shift

- Introducing a **bio-psycho-social lens** to families, teachers and therapists to use with children diagnosed with autism is key to this shift.

- Society has framed autism as a behavioral disorder that can be controlled using behaviorism. This is neat, simple and direct. It comes with a recipe like manual. If a child has this diagnosis this is what you do.

What is the federal educational definition of autism?

- **Federal Definition:** federal law at 34 CFR 300.7.

- (i) Autism means a **developmental disability** significantly affecting verbal and nonverbal communication and social interaction, generally evident before age 3, that adversely affects a child's educational performance. Other characteristics often associated with autism are engagement in repetitive activities and stereotyped movements, resistance to environmental change or change in daily routines, and **unusual responses to sensory experiences.** The term does not apply if a child's educational performance is adversely affected primarily because the child has an emotional disturbance, as defined in paragraph (b)(4) of this section.

- (ii) A child who manifests the characteristics of "autism" after age 3 could be diagnosed as having "autism" if the criteria in paragraph (c)(1)(i) of this section are satisfied.

Teaching Standards
What are teachers expected to know?

- NJ Professional Standards for Teachers and School Leaders (2011)

- **Human Growth and Development**

- 2.1 How students construct knowledge, acquire skills and develop habits of mind and how to use instructional strategies that promote student learning;

- 2.2 How student learning is influenced b*y individual experiences,* talents and prior learning, as well as language, culture, family, and community values; and

- 2.3 *How to identify and teach to the developmental abilities of students, which may include learning differences, visual and perceptual differences, cultural and socio-emotional differences, special physical or emotional challenges* and gifted and talented exceptionalities.

Teaching Standards
What are teachers expected to know?

- NJ Professional Standards for Teachers and School Leaders (2011)

- Special Needs: Teachers shall adapt and modify instruction to accommodate the special learning needs of all students.

- 7.1 How to access information regarding applicable laws, rules, regulations and procedural safeguards regarding planning and implementing the individual education program;

- 7.2 Available resources related to educational strategies for instruction and *methods of teaching to accommodate individual differences and to employ positive behavioral intervention techniques for students with special needs including students with autism and other developmental disabilities;* and

- 7.3 *The characteristics of students with special needs*.

Teachers are expected to engage in activities to:

- **7.8** Meet the needs of all learners by using a wide range of teaching techniques to accommodate and modify strategies, services and resources, including technology and *inclusive educational practices and collaborative partnerships;*

Other states have similar expectations for teacher knowledge and performance

- Knowledge of child and adolescent development, including students' cognitive, language, social, emotional, and physical developmental levels. (NY State Teaching Standards 2011: Element I.1, Charlotte Danielson Framework used by states in Race to the Top Teacher Evaluations)

- Engage and collaborate with colleagues. (NY State Teaching Standards 2011: Element VI.2, Charlotte Danielson Framework used by states in Race to the Top Teacher Evaluations)

Teacher Education and Teacher Development

- Dewey (1938) believed that without the proper theoretical preparation, teachers would have to rely completely on their practical experiences to interpret what they were seeing in their classrooms.

- Their focus would be on external behaviors rather than on internal processes.

- This is what we see in special education today where general and special educators want to understand methods to control and shape behaviors of children with ASD but have not been "socialized to develop dispositions toward inquiry, reflection and an orientation to **direct their attention at the underlying intellectual and motivational processes of the child."** (Shulman, pg. 514)

Teacher Education and Teacher Development

- In order for teachers to teach students diagnosed with ASD who have complex developmental profiles, they must become "serious learners in and around their practice, rather than amassing strategies and activities" (Ball & Cohen, 1999, p. 4).

- Presenting a bio-psycho-social perspective for understanding ASD may cause teachers to look at these children through a different lens and that may create "change-provoking disequilibrium" (Opfer & Pedder, 2011).

- Teachers' former experience as a student, member of society and teacher has likely offered them a mechanistic rather than an organismic model of development from which to understand children with ASD (Costa & Witten, 2009).

Theory to Support a Bio-Psycho-Social Perspective of ASD

- 1-Interpersonal nature of human development

- 2-Affective and interpersonal processes in brain development (neurology)

- 3-Historical & contemporary perspectives on autism

- 4-Models of human development

- 5-Challenges posed by autism spectrum disorder

- 6-Disorders in sensory processing and regulation

- 7-Affective and gestural systems of communication: development of speech & language

- 8-Stages of social and emotional development

- 9-Socio-cutural context of autism

- 10-Perspectives regarding inclusion

- 11-Reflective practice

Supporting Teachers' in Making a Conceptual Shift

- It is important to provide adequate support and wrap theoretical content in shared experiences within teachers' practices to avoid the possibility of dissonance or rejection of a framework that does not fit their current practice.

- "Theory is only as good as it resolves the problem to the satisfaction of those who are using it." – J. Schwab in Shulman (1998).

- While working in classrooms and engaging in discussions during workshops with teachers it is important to situate theory in the practice and find ways to make the theory useful to teachers.

Linking Theory to Practice Through Shared Experiences

Tell me and I'll forget

Show me and I'll remember

Involve me and I'll understand

-Chinese Proverb

Linking Theory to Practice Through Shared Experiences

- Sharing a moment
  - "Quiet hands"

- Discussing a shared observation
  - Adding engagement and communication to a sensory protocol

- Capturing a moment on video to unpack with an interdisciplinary team
  - Helping a child with ASD & global dyspraxia participate in a science lesson

A Parallel Process to Prevent Dissonance

- **The Functional Emotional Developmental Levels (Greenspan & Wieder, 2006)**

- 1: Self-regulation and Interest in the World

- 2: Forming Relationships: Attachment

- 3: Intentional Two-way Communication

- 4: Problem Solving Interactions

- 5: Creating Ideas and Representations

- 6: Analytic/Logical Thinking

Stage framework to explain and predict how teachers respond to new information about meeting the needs of young students with ASD (Catalano, 2012)

- **Stage 1- Self-regulation:** Teachers feel supported and able to support their students.

- **Stage 2-Forming Relationships:** Teachers develop an interdisciplinary curiosity and are interested in learning about what others are doing with their students

- **Stage 3-Intentional Two-way Communication:** Teachers begin to see their students' behaviors as intentional and communicative.

- **Stage 4-Problem-solving Interactions:** Teachers are wondering "why" a student does or does not do something and seeks more information to broaden their understanding of the child.

- **Stage 5- Creating Ideas:** Teachers expand their intervention role with students and take on a more transdisciplinary practice.

- **Stage 6-Analytic Thinking:** Teachers reflect on their own practice and how it impacts the student.

Several frameworks serve as models of teacher development that offer insight into the preparation of teachers of young children with ASD.

- Feiman-Nemser (2001) outlined a framework for the central tasks of learning to teach that investigates three phases; pre-service, induction and continuing professional development.
  - Useful in that it highlights the need for teachers to develop knowledge of their students and provides direction to teacher preparation programs on how to support the acquisition of this knowledge.
  - Not useful in understanding the developmental mechanisms and changes that occur in the teachers as they develop.

Several frameworks serve as models of teacher development that offer insight into the preparation of teachers of young children with ASD.

- Berliner (1994) applied understandings of expertise development to the development of expertise in teaching.
  - Useful in that it does address changes within the teacher,
  - Does not offer explanations for the qualitative changes from one stage to the next.

"coldly cognitive"

- Both Feiman-Nemser's as well Berliner's models are "coldly cognitive" (Pintrich, Marx & Boyle, 1993) and seem to ignore the *affective and motivational aspects of teachers' self-systems that influence their interaction with all students, but particularly those who offer new and unique challenges.*

Teachers' concerns for their students

- Fuller's model (1969) focuses on the concerns held by teachers engaged in their practice and frames them as moving from ego-focused concerns about self and task to other-focused concerns about their impact on students.

- Watzke's work (2007) indicates that beginning teachers have concerns regarding their impact from early on and are in need of preparation and support to help them address concerns such as the individual differences and needs of their students.

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Developmental Framework for Teachers of Young Children with ASD

- The model I propose here is intended to provide a frame for understanding the developmental changes experienced by practicing teachers

- It explicitly addresses the emotional/affective factors that influence this change process.

Conclusions

- Presenting a bio-psycho-social perspective for understanding ASD causes teachers to look at these children through a different lens.

- It is a necessary theoretical perspective to prepare teachers to work with students with this complex developmental profile.

- It may create **change-**provoking disequilibrium (Opfer & Pedder, 2011).

- The disequilibrium can be off-set with interdisciplinary, collaborative staffing patterns and mentorship.

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