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Faith-Learning Integration and Interdisciplinary Studies

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Omega Graduate School

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Professor

Dr. David Ward, Ph.D., Th.M.

Assignment

**Assignment #3- Faith-Learning Integration Worksheet**

1. Write a 5-page paper based on the following:

a. From the Course Resources tab in DIAL for SR 805, download the (a)

Interdisciplinary Faith-Learning Research Worksheet, and (b) Tips for

answering the questions for each of the seven steps of the interdisciplinarity

learning process.

b. Review (a) and (b). Complete the worksheet, including the top section,

providing submission date, your name, educational background, social

profession, and other pertinent information (e.g., I have worked/been involved

with/influenced by....)

c. Answer the questions for the seven steps of the OGS Interdisciplinary Faith-

Learning Research Worksheet.

d. Document all sources in APA style, 7th edition, for in-text citations and Work

Cited. Include page numbers.

e. Include a separate Works Cited page, formatted according to APA

style, 7th edition.

2. Submit through DIAL to the professor.

**Appendix 4A: Faith-Learning Integration Worksheet**

**Date:** 09/30/23

**Name of Scholar-Practitioner**: Rachel Gonatas

**Educational Background:** B.A and M.A in Christian Education, AMS Montessori Administrative Credential

**Social Profession:** Principal of a school for Gifted students

**Other Pertinent Information:** I have worked in Early Childhood settings, Montessori, and traditional Christian education schools. Montessori, Waldorf Schools, and the ACE curriculum have influenced me.

**STEP 1:** **OBSERVATIONS RAISING THE NEED FOR INQUIRY**

The problem is the organizational and attention issues gifted children experience. Organization, time management, study habits and skills, mentality, stress, sleep, and screens are the seven areas where disintegrating students exhibit skill deficiencies and unproductive practices. As a school administrator for gifted education, the awareness that students have become less motivated and need to take more autonomous initiative in their work has been more evident. There are advantages of intrinsic instructional goals for teachers who desire to help students become independent and intrinsically motivated.

Essential activities from everyday life are vital to a child's independence and educational growth and assist focus and a feeling of order. Students must develop executive function abilities to manipulate information, adapt to demands, prioritize activities, and engage in metacognitive reflection. These abilities should be systematically taught in educational institutions or prioritized in the curriculum. They are acquired through experiences and adult guidance, and students without sufficient opportunities may face academic difficulties Herren et al., 2019

Training with an Educational Executive Functioning and Life Skills curriculum (intervention) can support the readiness of student success in a program for gifted students. Incorporation of formative activities involving inspiration, repetition, and focus on specifics while taking into account the natural impulses and needs that occur during the various stages of childhood to support a student's ability to succeed academically. This approach is modeled after the Montessori approach to Practical Life skills.

**STEP 2: LITERATURE REVIEW- HERMENEUTICAL INQUIRY OF NATURAL/SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES/HISTORICAL TRADITIONS**

Executive Function is a set of cognitive processes responsible for higher-order functioning, including sequencing, working memory, flexibility, initiation, inhibition, planning, coordinating, and altering attention. It combines unity and diversity with commonalities such as inhibitory control and cognitive flexibility. Although no universal model has been adopted due to its multidimensional nature, there is a consensus on the Executive Function model, which emphasizes working memory, inhibition, and cognitive capacity. The neuropsychological community recognizes flexibility as a significant Executive Function (Breazeale, 2019). The prefrontal cortex, located in the frontal lobes, stores executive function skills. It also engages in various neural pathways and regions of the brain. The prefrontal cortex undergoes significant neuroanatomical and cognitive maturation throughout childhood and early adulthood. This growth is visible at the neuroanatomical level through increased white and grey matter, dendritic growth, and decreased neurons and synapses. Cognitive development starts around four, and cognitive flexibility starts around seven. By twelve, cognitive flexibility is considered mature (2019).

Executive Function Skills enable goal-directed conduct by managing impulsivity and making decisions that benefit pupils in obtaining desired outcomes. The three areas of Executive Function skills—cognitive adaptability, working memory, and inhibitory control—are distinct yet closely related. Understanding the correlation between age, the development of executive function, and its subsequent association with executive function components is of utmost significance (McCatharn, 2021).

Executive function is an expected neurocognitive deficit in students with ASD and ADHD, affecting cognitive abilities like working memory, response inhibition, and planning. Commonalities between ADHD and ASD include behavior regulation deficits and executive dysfunctions. Social interactions promote EF development, but teachers need more knowledge and access to educational resources. Efforts to improve EF include school curricula, non-computerized games, mindfulness, early executive function training, and providing students with a sense of belonging and social acceptance (Lima, 2021).

Self-determination theory is a scientific approach that emphasizes human behavior and personality development. It highlights the importance of motivation for behavior independence and how social factors affect individuals' thriving. Autonomy is the first basic need; competence requires adequate task mastery, and relatedness involves helping others. Students with ADHD may struggle to satisfy their psychological needs in class, leading to feelings of incompetence and negative relationships (2021). Academic Achievement is influenced by motivation, effort, and self-efficacy. Recognizing oneself as a learner and developing effective strategies can enhance school attitudes and performance. Focusing on these strategies within academic work fosters a success cycle. Schools teaching students their strengths and limitations empower them to take ownership of their learning (Ramsden, 2021).

Children's higher-order cognitive processes, including self-regulation skills, are crucial to their academic development. EFs are higher-order cognitive processes that directly influence learning essential skills like reading, mathematics, and problem-solving. EFs also support adaptive classroom behaviors, such as keeping on target, following rules, organizing materials, regulating emotions, and participating in group activities. Adaptive classroom initiatives help students maximize class time by focusing on learning objectives, engaging enthusiastically with peers, and participating in classroom activities. Studies measure student engagement and adaptation to school using surveys like the Teacher-Child Rating Scale. Adaptive classroom behaviors have been connected to longitudinal math and reading progress in elementary and middle school. Since the 1990s, researchers have studied predictors of youngsters' adaptive classroom behavior at home and school, as these practices affect academic achievement. Both EFs and challenge choice predict students' task orientation, confidence, peer social skills, and frustration tolerance, but only EFs are linked to behavior problems. Students' desire for challenges significantly affects the link between EFs and aggression, with EFs being more strongly related to confidence among students who dislike challenges (Finch, 2018).

**STEP 3: FAITH-LEARNING INTEGRATION INQUIRY WITH CHRISTIAN AND SCIENTIFIC SOURCES**

Christian education emphasizes the importance of developmental considerations, rooted in the command of Moses in Deuteronomy 6 and Jesus' disciple-making. Early educational pioneers struggled to find teachers with the necessary skills for classroom teaching. Still, this volume aims to equip readers with the skills needed for spiritual nurturing, development, and discipleship of followers of Christ. Christian education is an intentional process that helps individuals be formed in Christ, nurtured through Scripture by the Holy Spirit and the human teacher, and encouraged to continual development into mature disciples of Christ. Children struggle with abstract vocabulary words, so it is essential to teach them concrete content from the Scriptures. By introducing these concepts, children can better understand and apply the principles of Christianity and the Bible. Jean Piaget's theory suggests that the purpose of education is development, with the ultimate goal of glorifying God by becoming like Christ in every aspect of life. The Christian educator's task is to foster people's stories so they will become like Christ, who more fully love, know, and glorify God. Learning is a social activity, and good education must involve the whole body of believers, the church. Fowler's definition of faith as a universal human phenomenon applies to the Christian faith, where God is the ultimate environment and relationships are transformed. The Gospel offers a lens for understanding life issues, with the assurance that God loves us and controls our destiny (Williamson, 2006).

Gifted and twice-exceptional students are cognitively advanced and have heightened intensities that interact with their cognitive abilities. This critical distinction between intelligent and gifted students is crucial as it highlights the difference in intensity. Demanding immediate compliance from gifted students may not work, as it may not have the child's heart. The Bible in Isaiah 40:11 emphasizes the importance of a shepherd's care, as he tends to his flock like a shepherd, gathering lambs and carrying them close to his heart. Therefore, it is essential to understand and respect the unique needs and intensities of gifted students to ensure their well-being and success (Borrnick,2015). Christian teachers are responsible for supporting gifted students' social and emotional needs, as they may be susceptible to depression due to their early understanding of moral and intellectual concepts, requiring different and additional support (Cannaday,2017).

1 Corinthians 14:40 emphasizes the importance of organization and support for children's executive function abilities. Proverbs 22:6 encourages children to follow their path, even as they grow older. Gifted children often struggle to find friends who share their academic interests, leading to identity uncertainty and individualism. It is crucial to help them recognize their identity in Christ to connect with them. Executive functions, essential for daily living and independence, decline with age and can be further compromised by depressive symptoms. Understanding the pathophysiological mechanisms underlying the association between depressive symptoms and executive impairment can help identify biomarkers that increase the risk for dementia-related disorders and potential interventions. It is also crucial to identify protective factors for behavioral interventions that maintain optimal executive functioning in the presence of depressive symptoms and reduce cognitive impairment risk.

**STEP 4: SYNTHESIZED INTERDISCIPLINARY FORMULATION (WITH SOCIAL RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS)**

Practical Life in Education - Essential activities from everyday life are vital to a child's independence and educational growth and assist focus and a feeling of order: An Action Research Study.

The problem is the organizational and attention issues gifted children experience. Organization, time management, study habits and skills, mentality, stress, sleep, and screens are the seven areas where disintegrating students exhibit skill deficiencies and unproductive practices.
This study will utilize an action research approach, including a practical intervention of a curriculum for developing practical life skills for education and comparing self-reported awareness of skills before and after the intervention. This study will contribute to the gap in research of executive function skills within the classroom by identifying the best intervention methods and implementing a curriculum for developing practical life and executive function educational experiences and activities vital to support a student’s ability to thrive in education***.***

**STEP 5: CRITICAL (APOLOGETIC) AND CONTEXTUAL COMMUNICATION**

My target audience is gifted and twice-exceptional students. The correlation between academic accomplishment and motivation, exertion, and self-efficacy has been shown. Children's academic performance and school attitudes can be enhanced when they possess a self-perception as learners and cultivate adequate self-efficacy and executive function methods. Learning facilities should incorporate the instruction of students' strengths and limitations into their curriculum, equipping them with a comprehensive set of ways to enhance their capabilities and foster a sense of responsibility toward their educational development. The arrangement of classrooms should be designed to promote the cultivation of complex decision-making processes by implementing practical organizational tactics that prioritize both work and learning. The interventions implemented will encompass intervention approaches suitable for the specific grade band. These techniques will facilitate goal setting, planning, and assignment mapping and enhance note-taking and study abilities. Additionally, the interventions will focus on promoting the organization of materials and utilizing checklists.

**STEP 6: ETHICAL & SOCIAL ORTHOPRAXIS**

Research has shown that faith ties individuals to the Earth and one another, making it simpler to create a sustainable community. Spirituality provides us with a profound awareness of our restricted circumstances and a sense that we are a part of something greater, deeper, and more complicated. Who we believe we are, why we think we are here, and how we feel about one another and the world are all aspects of spirituality. The spiritual virtues of integrity, honesty, and humility are universal. Spiritual qualities include being alert, aware, loving and compassionate, patient, tolerant, forgiving, content, taking responsibility for oneself, and feeling at peace. A peaceful lifestyle that benefits individuals, society, and the environment is produced through instilling spiritual ideals like kindness and connectedness (Samul, 2019, p.267).

Equipping students with the essential practical life activities from everyday life is vital to a child's independence and educational growth and assists focus and a feeling of order. Christian leaders are tasked with promoting social change from the Bible's perspective, bridging the gap between orthodoxy and orthopraxis in various social contexts. By acting by their culture, God's grace transforms the world, aiding believers in advancing God's kingdom. In Micah 5:5, the Bible states, "He will be our peace." Interventions promoting order, autonomy, and motivation are essential to support students lacking executive functioning skills to establish God's desired peace.

**STEP 7: REFLECTIVE EVALUATION**

Higher-order cognitive processes, including self-regulation skills, significantly impact children's academic development. This study supports that Executive Functions directly influence essential skills like reading, mathematics, and problem-solving. Academic achievement is linked to motivation, effort, and self-efficacy. Recognizing oneself as a learner and developing efficient strategies can improve school attitudes and performance. Schools should teach students their strengths and limitations, providing them with strategies to empower them. EFs and challenge choice predict students' task orientation, confidence, peer social skills, and frustration tolerance. Classrooms should encourage challenging decisions by focusing on work and learning. I would love to follow up and see the long-term effect this intervention support has on a student's future academic motivation and if it helps the student feel secure in their capabilities toward academic success. I would also like to look into more research on the following topics that were brought out in this research:

* How does teaching to the test affect students?
* Is there a mindset misconception about giftedness?
* When students are praised for their intellect, they are more prone to adopt fixed mindset beliefs, beliefs that your talents do not change, making them more inclined to avoid problems to keep an intelligent identity.

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