A Series of Faulty Supports for Ten Faulty Notions: A Review of "Ten Faulty Notions About Teaching and Learning That Hinder the Effectiveness of Special Education"

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September 21, 2011

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In "Ten Faulty Notions About Teaching and Learning That Hinder the Effectiveness of Special Education" by William L. Heward (2003), the author presented a collection of 10 ideas that he claimed to obstruct teachers' ability to teach; however, lacking strong citations and using weak thought progression, Heward was only able to convey partial significance of his convictions to the reader. Heward presented his ten misguided notions as follow:

1. Structured curricula impeded true learning.

2. Teaching discrete skills trivializes education and ignores the whole child.

3. Drill and practice limits student' deep understanding and dulls their creativity.

4. Teachers do no need to (and/or cannot, should not) measure student performance.

5. Students must be internally motivated to really learn.

6. Building students' self-esteem is a teacher's primary goal.

7. Teaching students with disabilities requires unending patience.

8. Every child learns differently.

9. Eclecticism is good.

10. A good teacher is a creative teacher. (p. 188)

With this collective philosophy of erroneous principles, Heward argued that teachers did not use research-based instructional methods. Unfortunately, Heward took a close-minded approach to each of his statements thinking of each as a law, lacking flexibly for partial acceptance. His supporting evidence and logic only held up some of his ideals and left many blaring for more justification. Generally speaking, a set of possibly strong ideologies was left to collapse due to the author's narrow mindset in providing support for his *faulty notions*.

Heward's ten ideals easily combine into two overlying themes: teaching methodology and instructor bias. The notions regarding structured curricula, discrete skill-teaching, drill and practice, assessment, and eclecticism reflect teaching methodology. Heward argued that the teaching methodology-related notions required significant research that currently did not exist. For instance, Heward stated, " No empirical evidence has shown that structured curricula and teacher-led instruction lead to any of the negative outcomes asserted by advocates of child-centered, "progressive" education" (p. 189). At the time of publication, this statement appears factual; however, the statement fails for posterity due to modern research conflictions. Current publications assert that using child-centered educational methods when teaching music, secondary physiology, and middle school language arts to students with disabilities specifically demonstrated high levels of performance in students not taught in a teach-led manner (Anjur, 2011; Niland, 2009; Haydon, Maheady, and Hunter, 2010). Moreover, Heward asserted that switching teaching methods, specifically called eclecticism in the classroom, muddles the education and leads to poor performance. Nonetheless, a variety of authors showed that combing methods epitomized the ideal instructional method (Goodson and Choi, 2008; Gorard and Taylor, 2004; Hulan, 2010). Clearly, Heward cannot support his assertions for a singular teaching method with research, but his arguments for particulars of the teaching methodology deserve some merit.

When discussing specific methods of teaching that no longer appear creditable based on the ten notions, Heward assertively held up his beliefs. The author discussed the fault in misjudging the validity of discrete skill-teaching, drill and practice methods and use of assessments. His arguments to support the necessity of discrete skill-teaching and use of assessments showed no weaknesses at all. The only misstep in his standpoint on drill and practice presented itself in the repetition of the phrase, "properly conducted" (p. 190). Here, the author pointed out a specific weakness in drill and practice by noting that the method works effectively only when conducted under specific guidelines. Being true of most models, this loophole seems minor; however, the author presents the same issue as reason for the invalidity of notions such as creative teaching. Hence, the issue of proper implementation partial nullifies the present issue. Again, the author uses these methods singularly, which earlier evidence deemed less than preferable, but the assertions are valid when removed from the judgment. Plainly, Heward mildly supports some points on teaching methodology but not at all; nonetheless, his arguments towards teacher bias equally present his meager support approach.

Heward's notions regarding internal motivation, self-esteem, patience, learning differences and creativity reflect instructor bias. When arguing internal motivation and self-esteem, Heward uses poor logical progression to support his ideas. For instance, Heward only uses the work of Kohn (1993a, 1993b) to support the presence of the notion that students need internal motivation and bases the importance of self-esteem as the primary goal for teachers only on the correlation between self-esteem and achievement. Both offer feeble pillars of each notion and lead to topics impossible to attack based solely on their weak support from the start. One cannot break down a point that has not been made. Heward continues to criticize each point with valid research and theory; however, the author makes poor bases for his arguments. For example, Heward wrote, "some teachers think that praising takes too much time away from teaching" (p. 193). Unfortunately, Heward cannot cite any publications reflecting this opinion, which make the view inadequate and unbelievable. Sadly, Heward presents formidable research to support other items pertaining to these topics, such as, "some teachers believe it is unnatural to praise" (p. 193), which is substantiated with the research of Foxx (1992). Again, lapses in the presentation of important aspects of his logic brought Heward's credibility to a halt.

Similarly, on the topics of patience, learning differences and creativity, Heward's points crumbled due to his extremism on each that ultimately faults his logic. In each case, Heward did not argue against a moderate or mild view of each element, but gave only extreme cases that are rarely present. Heward argued against a teacher with outlandish patience, over-enthusiastic attention to differences, and an eccentric amount of creativity rather than looking at a customary teacher's amount of each. Regrettably, Heward's arguments for removing patience from the idea of the special education teacher's arsenal were convincing and well supported. Nonetheless, he focused the need for patience on the ineffectual epitome of a teacher who does not teach until requested by his students. This example seems incredible and clearly does not reflect the pedagogy of new teachers, so arguments aimed to diminish this example have little resonance with the reader. Similarly with creativity, Heward presented a hypothetical teacher who creates so much that it seems impossible to learn. One cannot assume that this teacher exists because the model is extremely outlandish. A teacher that makes games out of every single assignment is unbelievable to anyone who studies or has studied education, making the entire notion null and void. As seems Heward's habit, potentially great arguments were ruined due to a lack of support for the initial conviction.

As much as Heward's ten notions seem to fail, he ended the article with a set of worthy recommendations as follow: "(1) View Special Education as a Profession... (2) Ask for the Data and Evaluate Their Believability... (3) Focus on Alterable Variables" (p. 200-201). Heward demonstrated that by thinking of education as a profession one can focus on how to perform the job correctly, that by analyzing the data one can perform that job in the most effective manner possible, and that by focusing on alterable variables one can take their teaching to the next level by changing elements that will bring the students' education to a epitomized state. Each of these recommendations force the reader to reflect on Heward's previously stated notions and develop a collective understanding of what elements of teaching special education resonate as most important. In this, Heward achieved his goal by making the reader reflect on the significance of using research-based methods in the classroom. Whether accepting or rejecting the notions and their support, the reader leaves this article considering how well his or her teaching is backed by research. Heward's series of defective supports for his ten faulty notions somehow produced an exceptionally effective reflection impossible to ignore, so much that his ten faulty notions developed into tenets for faculty motions toward effectiveness of special education.

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