Integrating Self-Regulation in Culturally Responsive Practice

Barry Zimmerman, one of self-regulated learning theory's foremost exponents states "self-regulation is not a mental ability or an academic performance skill; rather it is the self-directive process by which learners transform their mental abilities into academic skills" (Zimmerman, 2002 p. 66). He continues "self-regulation is important because a major function of education is the development of lifelong learning skills" (p. 66). He elaborates this point in language reflected in conceptions of college and career readiness by asserting that self-regulation is essential for success in the workplace and a fulfilling life beyond employment. Zimmerman writes:

After graduation from high school or college, young adults must learn many important skills informally. For example, in business settings, they are often expected to learn a new position, such as selling a product, by observing proficient others and by practicing on their own. Those who develop high levels of skill position themselves for bonuses, early promotion, or more attractive jobs. In self-employment settings, both young and old must constantly self-refine their skills in order to survive. Their capability to self-regulate is especially challenged when they undertake long-term creative projects, such as works of art, literary texts, or inventions. In recreational settings, learners spend much personally regulated time learning diverse skills for self-entertainment, ranging from hobbies to sports.

Researchers T.J. Cleary and Barry Zimmerman characterize self-regulated learners in their article "Self-Regulation Empowerment Program: A School-Based Program to Enhance Self-Regulated and Self-Motivated Cycles of Student Learning," as students who "incorporate various self-regulation processes (e.g., goal setting, self-observation, self-evaluation) with task strategies (e.g., study, time-management, and organizational strategies) and self-motivational beliefs (e.g., self-efficacy, intrinsic interest). This occurs "in three cyclical phases: forethought (i.e., processes that precede any effort to act), performance control (i.e., processes occurring during learning efforts), and self-reflection (i.e., processes occurring after learning or performance). The forethought processes influence the performance control processes, which in turn influence self-reflection phase processes" (Cleary and Zimmerman, 2004, p. 538).

In "The Social Origins of Self-Regulatory Competence," Schunk and Zimmerman posit that these skills are developed in four successive phases that resemble Vygotsky's fading or gradual release model (Schunk and Zimmerman, 1997; Boykin and Noguera, 2011). The observational phase is primarily driven by an instructor and consists of explicit modeling and verbal descriptions of self-regulation strategies. Students begin to engage in self-regulation during the imitative phase, which is characterized by learners "emulating the general style of the model" (p. 199) and receiving corrective feedback. The self-controlled phase is distinguished by "the capability of learners to use the strategy independently when completing transfer tasks," however it remains dependent on representational strands of the model's performance." Students ability to match the behaviors exhibited by the model provides positive reinforcement that supports the development of the necessary sense of self-efficacy for learners to assume full control in the self-regulated phase. This is characterized by a learner's ability to "systematically adapt their learning strategies to changing personal and contextual conditions" (p. 199). At this point "the learner chooses when to use a strategy and varies its features in a self-regulated manner with little dependence on the model during this phase" (p. 199).

A. Wade Boykin and Pedro Noguera include self-regulated learning (SRL) in the "Guiding Functions" chapter of their important work Creating the Opportunity to Learn: Moving From Research to Practice to Close the Achievement Gap as an example of an effective, evidence-based instructional practice with potential to support the learning of diverse students. Boykin and Noguera state "self-regulated learning is emphasized here, in large measure, because it leads to enhanced engagement and academic performance, but it also can be especially beneficial to struggling learners, beginning learners, learners diagnosed with learning disabilities, and other students who might otherwise be placed at risk for academic failure" (Boykin & Noguera, p. 56). Toward the end of their treatment of SRL, Boykin and Noguera ask "what are the conditions or prerequisites that most likely lead to the emergence of self regulated learning?" (Boykin & Noguera, p. 60).

While the end goal of self-regulation is an ability to direct one's learning independently, Schunk and Zimmerman are careful to situate it as a social-cognitive process. That is, before one can internalize self-regulated learning strategies, they must learn these skills in a social, interpersonal process. There is broad agreement that learning is enhanced through high quality teacher-student relationships. With this in mind, I would like to suggest that authentic teacher-student relationships that are asset-based and culturally responsive constitute one of the necessary "conditions and prerequisites" for effective development of self-regulation.

Zaretta Hammond's Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain advances what she calls the Ready for Rigor framework in which she lays out a process to help students evolve from dependent to independent learners. This is driven by a relationship she terms the Learning Partnership Alliance (Hammond, p. 92). Hammond draws on psychologist Edward Bordin's definition of the therapeutic alliance that consists of:

- A shared understanding and agreement to tackle a specific goal.
- A shared understanding and agreement about the tasks necessary to reach that goal along with the confidence that these activities will lead to progress.
- A relational bond based on mutual trust that creates an emotional connection and sense of safety for the client/student in order to do the hard work necessary to reach that goal. (Hammond, p. 93).

Hammond follows Judith Kleinfeld in describing teachers who create these learning alliances "warm demanders" whose "personal warmth and authentic concern...earns her the right to demand engagement and effort" (p.97). She continues "the culturally responsive teacher willingly develops the skills, tools, and techniques to help students rise to the occasion as she invites them to step out of their comfort zone into the zone of proximal development" (Hammond, p. 100).

Hammond provides a list of resources and supports that students require as they grow into independent learners. They include:

- Kid friendly vocabulary for talking about their learning moves
- Checklists to help hone their decision making skills during learning and focus their attention during data analysis
- Tools for tracking their own progress toward learning targets
- Easily accessible space to store their data
- Regular time to process their data
- Practice at engaging in metacognitive conversations about their learning
- A clear process for reflecting on and acting on teacher or peer feedback" (Hammond, p. 101).

References:

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