

Assignment 5 Discussion – Ideology

Provide a synopsis (approximately 250 words) of an article of your choice, available at <http://www.keele.ac.uk/depts/por/ptbase.htm>

Include the title and author of the article you selected. Explain why this article was particularly meaningful for you based on your reflections about your personal philosophy of education.

Article: Are U.S. Students Behind?

Author: Gerald W. Bracey

<http://www.prospect.org/cs/articles?articleId=4736>

I currently teach developmental (or should I say remedial?) math courses at a small catholic university in Miami. Many of my students have clearly demonstrated lack of basic skills to confront and overcome the challenges and demands of earning a college degree. There is not a day that I have not discussed with my colleagues the topic of how it is possible that many of these students graduated from high school since they are struggling significantly in these basic courses. From my experience, it will be easy to believe what the media portray about American students, “They can’t read, they can’t do math, they are abysmally ignorant of science,” (Bracey, 2002) which has been based on comparative studies of American students against students of other nations.

In his article, Bracey does not deny that American schools need improvement but not as dramatic as the media portrays, where schools are terrible and must be revamped. He claims the media and previous republican administrations publicly focused more on the bad news than on the good news about schools and students’ performances, which had caused most Americans to believe that our children do poorly in comparison to foreign students. In addition, Bracey allege that the statistical comparative studies of American students’ performances versus foreign students have been manipulated to exaggerate the achievement gap. In particular, he states that comparing American students’ average scores and rankings against foreign students is not a fair and reliable comparison since it does not show the variability of performances among American students. The comparative studies have shown that two-thirds of American schools are performing average or above levels. However, the bottom third is not performing not even at par as the lowest nation in one of the studies. Bracey pointed out that is this segment of American schools that “requires a far more targeted and discriminating approach.”

Bracey is optimist that our schools can do better by learning from these comparative studies, which are showing what other nations are doing in their schools. For example, one of the studies showed that our teachers were covering as three times more topics than teachers of the other nations in the same grade level. The topics covered in a subject matter should not depend on quantity instead of quality. For such reason, I do believe we (teachers) should return teaching the basics instead of teaching advance courses at younger ages. Students are learning too many concepts and skills superficially instead of studying a few concepts in-depth, which brings up a point of concern.

Bracey compared Asian dedicated-focus education style versus American layback-extracurricular education style in his article and he stated the following, “Moreover, American higher education, which is more widely available than in Asian countries, seems to make up for a less intense pace at the primary and secondary levels.” This over reliance on higher education to make up for the deficits of our school is not the way of unlocking the doors of opportunity to our students as I stated in my philosophy of education. Students become frustrated and unmotivated when they cannot overcome the challenges of earning a higher education degree. It is here when our students gets behind!