

Name:

Course: Psychology 621 – Advanced Educational Psychology

Professor:

Date: August 23, 2015

Title: Self-Assessment Action Plan

## **Introduction**

A child's success depends on how he or she learns. As educators we need to be cognizant of at least some if not all the factors that impact how students learn. When one is able to understand and apply the necessary steps that will enable children to learn, then without a doubt children will succeed and achieve their full potential. My knowledge of Advanced Educational Psychology has definitely empowered me, thus enabling me to have a wider perspective of how students learn, the challenges they encounter and how I can utilize this knowledge to empower others and also the students whom I teach. The topics that I will be embarking on to formulate my action plan are:

- ✚ Enabling students to appreciate school more
  - ✚ Improving students teacher relationship
  - ✚ Clarifying the misconceptions about multi-tasking
  - ✚ Promoting character building with special emphasis on grit among Grade Five students
  - ✚ Promoting the understanding of failure in relation to success
- 
- ❖ **Enabling students to understand the advantages of being in school and how these can enhance their development both academically and socially.**

This topic is important to me due to the fact that it is the medium through which students get the opportunity to improve their educational status thus empowering them to achieve their full potential. Not only will they achieve academic success, but they will become rounded individuals who are able to function in society. As outlined in Hattie and (Yates 2014), being at school has numerous benefits. Schooling is an inherently social process, and the attitudes of peers, exert a strong impact upon the individual tend to align our attitudes to the attitudes of people we perceive as similar to ourselves. In the article entitled Character Strengths and Positive Youth Development, Nansook Park stated beautifully that it is important that students enjoy learning and want to come to school, but teaching grit necessarily means that students will experience and perhaps embrace some frustration and pain. Grit in this instance is referring to the perseverance and resilience that a child endures in order to achieve success. As an educator, I have to motivate my students thus letting them understand that to achieve success, one has to be resilient and optimistic in all their endeavors.

**❖ Improving student-teacher relationship with special emphasis on trust and being accommodating**

School is seen as a second home, therefore there should be a place of comfort and open relationship. This is a very important factor in the teaching learning process. How can students learn if the teacher is not accommodating? Teachers are supposed to be role models therefore their attitude towards their students should be one of trust and being approachable. What do I mean by this? This simply means that whenever students are overwhelmed by any situation, the teacher should be someone approachable and one that he or she is able to confide in. Hattie and Yates (2014, p. 261) express the thought that

smiling is less of a private response, but more of a public display intended to establish and affirm social connections. Whenever a teacher portrays a pleasant personality, students are always comfortable in speaking to this individual. Another very important factor is that of feedback. Seeing that feedback is very important during the impartation of knowledge, teachers need to use low-level smiling, meaning that they should have a pleasant countenance; thus facilitating positive interpersonal interactions (Hattie & Yates, 2014, p. 264). Another reason why teachers should foster a good relationship with their students is the fact that students who suffer from adverse childhood experiences (ACE), such as sexual or physical abuse, death of a parent or any other emotional trauma need an avenue in which they can get emotional support. As a result of this trauma, children generally find it harder to sit still, comprehend and follow directions (Tough, 2012, p.17) therefore, school is sometimes the only medium where children get a chance to express themselves and even be shown love by peers and teachers. As educators, our role encompasses a myriad of other professions. Poet, Taylor Mali (2013) is correct when he penned the following in the poem Miracle Worker (<http://www.taylormali.com>), “Just like a builder builds, a sculptor sculpts, a preacher preaches, we are teachers who are experts in the art of explanation.” He is correct in his statement because our field of work is such that we can either make or break a child in how we teach, what we say and our overall mannerism towards our students. We therefore need to be there for our students by being the best role model we can and let our students have persons whom they can, confide in, trust and emulate.

❖ **Clarifying the misconceptions of multi-tasking.**

I, like many of my colleagues were quite enlightened to learn that what we do on a regular basis and consider it to be multi-tasking is really a fallacy (Hattie & Yates, 2014, p. 187). Yes, we know that most of what we do during multitasking can be to our detriment but I think we are just thinking of how skillful we all are. (Hattie & Yates, 2013) definitely have opened our eyes to the understanding that much learning is not really taking place because as skillful as we might think we are, we can accomplish only one task with the greatest efficiency. This is so because the brain is wired to focus accurately on one thing at a time so if more than one is being done, the others will not be done at the required standard. So what are we really doing when we think we are multi-tasking? What we are doing is code switching. (Hattie & Yates, 2014, p. 193) explain as follows:

Overall, the message is that multitasking is the wrong option anytime you expect to learn, acquire knowledge, or think deeply. Should you need to react with diligence and sensitivity, attempting to multitask will guarantee inferior performance at some point. Under a multitasking regime, your ability to apply your intelligence, and allow metacognition to drive careful decision-making, become first-line casualties.

Knowledge is power; so after gaining this knowledge, I decided that I could not keep it to myself. Others need to be empowered so that they can also come to the realization that multitasking can lead to complacency especially where rules are concerned. As an educator, this fact is extremely important in relation to the teaching and learning process. Children have the tendency of talking to their peers while teaching is being done. This is detrimental to them because they usually miss out on what is being taught. Another

negative point that falls under the umbrella of multitasking is that of music. Music becomes an issue once the learner starts to listen to it, rather than focus on other material (Hattie & Yates, 2014, p. 191). Children believe that singing while working is “cool” but most times they are distracting others and impeding learning. I am sure that if individuals are empowered with the knowledge about multitasking, they will develop a growth mindset; that is they will see this as an opportunity to learn and by so doing they will not be putting themselves and others at risk.

**❖ Promoting character building, with special emphasis on GRIT among Grade Five students.**

At the grade five level, students tend to become quite nervous because this is the year before the Grade Six Achievement Test. Nervousness is usually evident not only among the children but the parents too. During this period more than ever, children need to have all the support that they can get from both family and staff.

I have chosen this topic because as educators, it is our responsibility to mold young minds and one such way is to promote character building. Children need to understand that moral values and attitude play a major role in their academic development.

“Character is a set of abilities that are very much changeable-entirely malleable, in fact. They are skills you can learn; they are skills you can practice; and they are skills you can teach” (Tough, 2012, p. 98). If this is taught by way of motivational talks, encouraging words, scripture verses especially from the Book of Proverbs and displaying motivational thoughts in the classroom, children will have a better understanding of the importance of achieving academic excellence and the relevance of ‘grit’ in achieving academic excellence.

### ❖ **Promoting the Understanding of Failure in Relation to Success.**

In life, no one wants to fail because if you do, others tend to treat you with disdain. This is quite prevalent in schools because the system is driven by test scores and fixed mindset of teachers; that is the belief that some students are not capable of achieving so they will always see them as ‘dunce’, ‘lazy and poor achievers. If you do not achieve the required grades, you are deemed as a failure. Children can get very depressed under these circumstances therefore, our responsibility as educators is to educate students toward having a growth mindset, that is the understanding of them knowing that they will not always be top achievers but they will achieve their goals by acknowledging their mistakes and moving forward regardless of the circumstances. By so doing they will understand that when one fails it does not mean that one is a failure it is only a process, failure is refusing to get up, brush off one’s self and start afresh. Resilience is the key to overcome all challenges and move forward because this is the only way by which one will achieve the goals that one hopes to achieve.

According to Tough (2012), Nadine Burke Harris and Elisabeth Dozier were the driving forces behind poverty stricken low achievers whom they motivated and challenged in understanding that to overcome failure, one definitely has to possess grit because it is a fact that most times it is not that poor are incapable of learning and achieving but it is their circumstances that impede progress. Not only do they have to be resilient and courageous but a lot of licking and grooming have to be incorporated in the nurturing process. What do I mean by this? Parents and other caregivers have to form close, nurturing relationships with their children so that they can be protected from the harsh effects of the environment (Tough, 2012, p. 28). As educators, this is one way of

motivating our students that is why it is imperative that the knowledge I have acquired is shared with my fellow colleagues as well as parents by way of workshops and during grade meetings thus enabling them to teach the positives of failure and how it can be used to motivate students in becoming successful.

## **FOCUS TOPIC**

### **Promoting Character Building with Special Emphasis on Grit in Grade Five**

#### **Students**

Advanced Educational Psychology gives an in-depth understanding of the different genres of students' learning and the many and varied challenges that prevent learning from taking place. I have gained a wealth of knowledge and many misconceptions have been put into perspective. I am now equipped with the knowledge to educate my students as well as my colleagues thus enabling them to rise above the challenges that sometimes prevent effective learning to take place. My focus will be on the promotion of grit in my grade five classroom.

Why have I chosen grit to be my topic of interest? This is important to me because as an educator who has overcome many challenges due to my adverse childhood experiences, I have displayed resilience and grit to be where I presently am. I did not know that the resilience that I have displayed is based on the psychological term 'grit' which is the means by which I have withstood all the major challenges and persevered in achieving my goals. Due to this fact, I would like to motivate my students to the point where they will have an increased growth mindset and the understanding that in order to achieve their goals they need to adapt specific character traits that will empower them. Some of

these traits are optimism, resilience, curiosity and self-control. Being empowered with these positive traits they will surpass the academic performance attained at the grade four level. Due to the fact that these students have been preparing for the Grade Six Achievement Test from grade four, they will be encouraged to continue in the preparation mode and try to achieve targets that were not met earlier. According to Nansook Park in his book entitled: “*Character Strengths and Positive Youth Development,*” as educators we need to prepare our children for the real world by not only focusing on reading, writing and arithmetic but focus on building character which will ultimately enable them to be successful in whatever they undertake.

In order for my students to develop a growth mindset toward acquiring grit, certain changes will have to be implemented. These changes will take effect in a collaborative way, meaning that all stakeholders will be involved. Some of the changes are as follows:

1. Students being more responsible for their education especially in relation to the completion of homework in preparation for the Grade Six (GSAT) Examination.
2. Students displaying more interest in their work, setting personal goals and working towards achieving them regardless of the many challenges.
3. More collaboration being displayed by parents in the acquiring of badges which will be awarded to students who have met the designated target for academic recognition.
4. Students becoming more optimistic and curious about learning by believing in themselves by asking questions when information is not clear and displaying good leadership qualities thereby improving self-esteem and work towards self-efficacy.

5. Hosting parent consultation sessions whereby parents can get relevant feedback on students' academic and behavioral progress, and strategies for improvement where it is necessary.
6. Students doing research on outstanding personalities who have displayed grit in their endeavors thus allowing them to be acclaimed heroes. Students will then do presentation of their work.

How am I going to implement these changes that I have mentioned? The following are the specific steps that will be taken to facilitate the envisioned changes.

**Step #1:**

**ACTION:** Students are presently given homework on a daily basis, however it will take a different format in that the daily assignment will be done with the writing of tickets to explain what was learnt the previous day so teacher can identify and clarify any misunderstandings. Parent should sign child's ticket and this should be presented to teacher as their passport to class. To motivate and encourage those who have done their homework and have them signed, they will be given the opportunity to address the class by stating what they have learnt. This action will be done as a gesture of supporting students for their efforts and applauding their tenacity (cited in Hoerr, 2013, p.10),

**WHEN:** Reward of motivational stickers will be given daily to those who have completed assignments. At the end of the month, a reward will be given to the group that has all its members completing the homework. This will be ongoing seeing that it is already being done as one way of motivating students.

**WHO:** Class teacher, parents and other stakeholders.

**Step # 2:**

**ACTION:** Having motivational talks, posting inspirational “gritty thoughts in classroom and having students writing them as penmanship. This action is not new, however; motivational talks will be centered on character building. Inspirational and gritty thoughts that will be posted will be taken from speakers’ presentations.

**WHEN:** At the beginning of school year and on-going.

**WHO:** Teacher, students, former students from the Prefect body, reputable persons from the community who have been resilient in achieving their goals and can be seen as role models.

**Step # 3:**

**ACTION:** Facilitating mandatory workshops for parents during Grade or Parents Teachers Association Meetings, to educate them about how children succeed (information learnt in Advanced Educational Psychology). Bryan (2005, p. 224) has stated that this is one medium through which parents can be educated thus helping their children to succeed. Of course workshops are usually done but seeing that the emphasis is on ‘grit’, parents will be educated on how to empower themselves and their children.

**WHEN:** First term of school year and on-going.

**WHO:** Director and Principal who will be granting permission for workshops to be conducted. Teacher, Guidance Counselor and Motivational Speakers as facilitators. Parents and students as learners and participants

**Step # 4:**

**ACTION:** Class meeting that will take the format of what is called a “Circle of Courage” where students will develop a sense of belonging, mastery, independence and generosity (Brendtro, Bockern & Brokenleg, 2005). By so doing students will get the chance to establish trusting connections, solve problems and achieve goals, develop self-control and responsibility and opportunity to display respect and concern. Each child will be invited to state issues of concern that possibly prevent him or her from achieving his or her goals. Discussion will follow to arrive at strategies that can be used to improve the areas of concern. The Circle of Courage was used by two teachers, (Yamagishi & Hocitekamer, 2005) to improve character strengths in their classroom. It was Blankley (2005) who said that children should be taught from the earliest age possible how to be self-reliant and be able to overcome problems by thinking and acting. By speaking out and expressing themselves, they will eventually overcome their challenges because by voicing them, they will get the help needed to make them have grit.

**WHO:** Teacher and students

**WHEN:** Ongoing

### **Step # 5**

**ACTION:** Morton stated that parental involvement is paramount in students being successful. With this as evidence, I will be having consultations sessions with parents after monthly tests and examinations so as to get feedback on academic progress and what should be done to assist students in improving weak areas. This is a continuation of what is happening but presently some parents are not as involved in their children’s academic performance as they should meaning that they do not help with homework,

projects or attend grade meetings. Due to this fact, every parent will be targeted so that no child will be left behind. Parenting involves a myriad of responsibilities and one of them is to motivate their child to be the best at what they do, thus making them gritty and effective in their endeavors (Morton, 2014, p. 78).

**WHO:** Teacher, Students and Parents

**WHEN:** Ongoing.

### **Step # 6**

**ACTION:** Laursen, (2015) has stated that when children gather information on personalities that portray perseverance and grit, these character traits resonate with them and motivate them to do likewise. Using this challenge as a motivational tool, my students will learn about people who have grit by doing research and report on such persons who have paved the way for us to have a better life by demonstrating perseverance in the face of hardship; for example, Paul Bogle and Rosa Parks. During presentation, children will indicate the character traits that appealed to them most and how these can be used to motivate them.

**WHO:** Students, Parents and Teacher

**WHEN:** Black History Month

### **Conclusion**

I envision that the teaching of grit to my Grade Five students will not be a walk in the park because embracing change is usually a challenge but I will be moving forward by

displaying the character traits that I want my children to possess; grit, perseverance, tenacity and resilience.

## References

- Blankley, T. (2009) Book - American Grit: *What Will It Take to Survive and Win in the 21st Century*. Regnery Publishing
- Brendtro, L. K., Brokenleg, M., & Van Bockern, S. (2005). The circle of courage and positive psychology. *Reclaiming Children and Youth*, 14(3)130
- Bryan, J. (2005) *Fostering educational resilience and achievement in urban schools through school-family-community partnerships*. Professional School Counselling, 219-227.
- Hattie, J., & Yates, G. (2014). *Visible learning and the science of how we learn*. Routledge
- Hoerr, T. R., (2013). *Fostering Grit: How do I prepare my students for the real world?* (ASCD Arias). ASCD
- Laursen, E. K. (2015). The Power of Grit, Perseverance and Tenacity: *Reclaiming Children and Youth*, 23(4)19.
- Mali, T. (2013) Miracle Worker, Visit <http://www.taylormali.com>
- Park, N. (2004) Character Strengths and Positive Youth Development, Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, Vol. 591, Positive Development Realizing the Potential of Youth (Jan., 2004), pp. 40-54
- Tough, P. (2012), *How children succeed*. Random House
- Yamagishi, R., & Houtekamer, T. (2005). Assessment and goal-setting with the circle of courage. *Reclaiming children and youth*, 14(3),160-163