Introduction

Observation and research confirm the importance of learning during an individual’s early childhood years. Life-long patterns are established that contribute to subsequent intellectual pursuits and emotional well-being. It is clear that knowledge of how children learn is fundamental in educational program development. It is also clear that effective methods to support children’s varied learning styles are not consistently implemented across the educational landscape. Determining which learning theory, teaching model, or motivational strategy is most effective with which types of learners is a daily challenge for educators, especially since new knowledge is constantly surfacing. Since ways of learning and knowing are often as diverse as personalities or physical types, teaching models and strategies must also be varied and must be sensitive to the manifest diversity of young children.

Delivering high-quality early childhood programs is a complex undertaking. Obtaining funding, advocating on behalf of young children, training practitioners, and continuing research are only a few of the many roadways early childhood scholars can travel.

Working with children is not limited to classroom settings but encompasses overall systems of program/service delivery. It includes advocacy and funding. It embraces the legal and political spheres. It involves serious work and research to provide adequate support, equitable service delivery, and appropriate treatment for all children.
The stakes of early childhood education continue to rise as we learn more about the importance of the first years of our youngest and most vulnerable citizens. With more children entering schools and child-care facilities at an earlier age and for longer periods of time, there is an increasing need to build upon existing knowledge of how young children learn.

The reality of the “global village” together with technological advances and changing demographics have decreased the effectiveness of some educational approaches and heightened the need for change in others. Continuing assessment of existing systems is crucial for maintaining, improving, and expanding educational and other support services for young children.

Understanding educational theory and practice is necessary beyond academia. Political leaders, parents, and early childhood advocates and policy makers must address early childhood concerns in order to eliminate inequities among communities of learners. Developing a clearer vision of the importance of early childhood education is necessary for a truly successful global community; one that provides a safe, secure, and challenging environment for all young children.

Challenges and Opportunities in This KAM

Your first challenge in this KAM will be to identify an aspect or combination of aspects relating to intelligence, learning, and/or motivation in early childhood that are relevant to your professional work. You will want to either look at these factors as they are manifested in individuals (e.g. case study research on the interaction of intelligence, motivation and learning of individual children) or the way one or more of these factors impact a particular group (e.g. motivational factors for English language learners). You
should then examine theory and research toward identifying practical implications and applications.

Because all dissertation studies undertaken at Walden are intended to be significant in some way for social change, in this KAM you may begin to build a foundation for satisfying that eventual outcome through acquiring an understanding of intelligence, motivation, and learning. The ultimate goal of this KAM is to provide information useful in helping children of varying abilities and backgrounds to successfully meet learning challenges in a diverse society.

The next challenge is to identify theories that will help you understand more about the ways that intelligence and motivation influence learning. There are many factors that are involved in this development. The task in the Breadth section of this KAM is to demonstrate that you understand several theories of intelligence, learning, and motivation and have brought critical thinking to bear on them. Demonstrating understanding is more than simply reporting what the theorists say. You need to demonstrate your understanding by using higher levels of thinking such as comparing and contrasting, analyzing, synthesizing, or evaluating them. In the other sections of the KAM, you will be able to relate your knowledge of theories to questions you have about intelligence, learning and motivation and apply some aspects of what you have learned.

In the Depth component, you have the opportunity to focus your understanding on the examination of a particular aspect affecting intelligence, learning, and motivation. Build upon the knowledge of a particular theory or theories of intelligence, learning and motivation you examined in the Breadth section and critically examine how they influence your professional context and are addressed in different ways by researchers in
your field. You will write about these in a way that shows that you know and understand what current researchers have discovered and can apply them to what you want to learn. You will also write to demonstrate that you are able to identify how their research is, or is not, helpful, perceptive, and well grounded, and what gaps remain in our understanding of intelligence, learning and motivation. Finally, you will address what still needs to be considered within your profession.

In the Application section, you have the opportunity to respond to issues of intelligence, learning, and motivation you have already addressed. You may design a project of your own, assess a project you have already completed, or assess the strengths and weaknesses of someone else’s project in terms of what you have gathered from the study of the underlying theories and research examined in the Breadth and Depth sections of this KAM.

Breadth Component
EDUC 8513 Theories of Intelligence, Learning, and Motivation of Children from Birth to Age 8 (5 cr)

The purpose of the KAM 5 Breadth component is to foster your understanding of the theoretical foundations that relate to intelligences, learning processes, motivation, and associated phenomena among young children. Associated topics include, but are not limited to, the learning environment, brain research, language and literacy issues, inclusion, cultural diversity, and multiple intelligences.

KAM 5 readings are designed to help you develop a critical understanding of the processes and exigencies associated with intelligence, learning, and motivation. You may, for example, choose to compare and contrast several theories through an integrative...
work demonstrating comprehensive knowledge of relevant concepts. You must
demonstrate critical analysis and show evidence of scholarly effort equivalent to that of a
doctoral seminar.

Here are some suggestions for the kinds of issues you might want to pursue in the
Breadth component of this KAM. There are intended to be suggestive only, but will give
you an idea of the kinds of topics your project might address.

1. What would an early childhood model combining the theory of multiple intelligences
   (Gardner), linguistic diversity, and traditional requirements look like? Include
   pedagogical and andragogical considerations.

2. In developing an eclectic approach to teaching, what components of major learning
   theories (e.g., behavioral, cognitive-developmental, cognitive-constructivist, humanistic)
   would you include?

3. What impact has recent brain research had on teaching and learning in early childhood
   programs?

4. What impact do state testing requirements have on early childhood education models
   in terms of emotional, cognitive, and social development?

5. Are there theoretical foundations applicable to inner-city early childhood models that
differ from those in more affluent areas? How can inequities in program effectiveness be
   minimized or eradicated without compromising quality?

6. How do intrinsic and extrinsic factors influence motivation? What theoretical
   foundations are these factors based upon?
Demonstration of Competence

Making use of the relevant readings, write a scholarly, doctoral-level paper demonstrating your understanding and synthesis of theories of intelligence, learning, and motivation. Your paper should demonstrate higher-level thinking skills such as inference, critical analysis, measured judgments, discussion of contradictions, and evaluation.

Learning Resources

A bibliography of possible references for this KAM can be found at the Walden Library site accessed through the faculty or student personal start page/campuscruiser. Once in the Walden Library site, click on Get KAM Research Help and look for the appropriate program or KAM. The Resources links will take you to general references that will provide an overview of the field or key thinkers. The Bibliography link will take you to a list of possible writings. The books and authors listed here are meant only to provide examples of the kind of literature you should be accessing. You can compile your own bibliographic references using this list as a starting point. If you have difficulty compiling a bibliography or choosing relevant readings, consult with your faculty mentor or KAM assessor and the Walden librarians.

Depth Component

EDUC 8523 Early Childhood Program Delivery in a Multicultural/Multifaceted Society (5 cr)

The goal of this KAM 5 component is to explore, in depth, foundations that underlie the best early childhood educational practices and support systems from the research literature. Relevant areas of study include, but are not limited to, the
implications of current brain research, curriculum development and implementation, bilingual education, multicultural education, inclusion issues, gender issues, assessment, and teacher training as these relate to learning and motivation in early childhood settings. While these areas of study may seem extensive, the reality of early childhood programs/services is such that these issues confront educators on a daily basis. The diversity and complexity of the young child’s needs necessitate a careful review beyond traditional models and theories of intelligence, learning, and motivation.

The Depth component relates as well to potential impediments to the early childhood educator and/or advocate. Therefore it may be helpful to explore issues such as politics, finance, institutional governance, bureaucracy, religion, accreditation, government mandates, and other factors affecting the ability of both individuals and institutions to effectively provide appropriate training, education, or services. Ideally, early childhood educators and advocates would be free from constraints to explore and implement the best theory and practices for all children. Realistically, shortages of time and other resources are prevalent in most systems and effectively work against full implementation. You are encouraged to identify impediments as they relate to your practice and to suggest strategies for amelioration.

Despite the constraints faced by many early childhood educators and advocates, there are also resources and support systems that facilitate better practice. These include professional organizations, state and federally funded grant programs, private foundations, and parent organizations, among others.

The following questions may provide a point of departure for your Depth component discussion and analysis.
1. In what ways has contemporary theory influenced current practice in early childhood programs?

2. What institutional or political realities affect appropriate early childhood programs and practices?

3. How have changing demographics affected early childhood education practices in America?

4. What role should technology play in early childhood education environments?

5. What educational strategies in early childhood settings contribute to mastering basic skills and critical thinking abilities?

*Demonstration of Competence*

1. Create an annotated bibliography of at least 15 referred journal articles, published primarily during the last 5 years, that relate specifically to the Depth component of this KAM. Books or book chapters may be included. The annotated bibliography should include at least two recent doctoral dissertations in your area of research. This is an excellent opportunity for you to gain familiarity with the scope and design of dissertations in your field. Each annotation must include a brief summary with an analysis of the article, book, or chapter contents. The bibliography should be arranged in alphabetical order by author.

2. Using readings from the bibliography that you have assembled, write a scholarly doctoral-level paper of about 25 pages demonstrating through discussion and analysis your understanding of theories of intelligence, learning, and motivation in an early childhood context. A doctoral-level paper should demonstrate higher-level thinking skills such as critical analysis, thorough comprehension, use of inferences, measured
judgments, discussion of contradictions, and evaluation.

**Learning Resources**

Because the Depth section is individualized, it is difficult to be specific about reading recommendations. Both edited books and journal articles should be used, although current research is more likely to be found in journal articles. You are encouraged to review a wide range of sources for this assignment but focus particularly on recent dissertation and journal articles.

**Application Component**

EDUC 8530 Professional Practice Using Learning and Motivational Theory in Context

(4 cr)

In the Application component of the KAM, your focus should turn to your own professional context. Here you may examine and critique a particular role of the profession in engaging in or responding to the specific phenomenon you have been examining throughout this KAM or propose and justify a response to that phenomenon.

In order for the Application component to be the most productive learning experience possible, it is useful to draw on learning from the Breadth and Depth components of the KAM. You are encouraged to review the resources presented in previous components of this KAM as well as the annotated bibliography compiled as part of the Depth component. In addition to these, you are urged to reflect on your own professional practice and firsthand experiences with issues relating to intelligence, motivation and learning.

Some suggestions of Application projects you might consider:

1. Develop a curriculum or educational program. Applying a theory or theories as
demonstrated in the first two KAM 5 components, design an early childhood program or service delivery utilizing practices that foster optimum development of the children being served.

2. Prepare a staff development or training manual, or design a workshop. Focusing on specific strategies for practice, prepare a manual or workshop presentation that other early childhood educators could use to improve practice.

3. Prepare a report that reflects your understanding of how your professional setting, or another of interest to you, has engaged in providing services to individuals. In so doing, you could engage in a number of personal interviews with key leaders as a means of developing a complete understanding of the selected topic. Documents such as case histories, curriculum materials, and records in the public domain are other useful resources that could be used.

4. Describe and evaluate a program that is intentionally dedicated to addressing differences in intelligence, motivation and learning that is operated by your selected institution or organization. Your evaluation could address the following: (a) a description of details such as the program, its goals, target audience, stakeholders, or delivery and implementation strategies; (b) a detailed description of the evaluation goals, target population/sample, design (qualitative, quantitative, mixed), data collection methods, and data analysis procedures; or (c) a summary of the major results of the evaluation, including conclusions, implications, and recommendations, especially as you assess them in the light of the theories and research studied in the earlier components of this KAM.

5. Develop a project of your own that addresses a specific aspect of intelligence, motivation, and/or learning. Consider including the following: (a) a needs assessment
that explains the aspect(s) you are addressing and why this is important to your
stakeholders; (b) a description of details such as the program, its goals, delivery, and
implementation strategies; (c) a description of how you will evaluate the degree of
success in implementing the program, including the evaluation goals, data collection
methods, and data analysis procedures; or (d) if the project is implemented, a summary of
major results of the evaluation, including conclusions, implications, and
recommendations.
6. A major work you have previously completed (e.g., a master’s thesis, curriculum
design, or professional project) may demonstrate your ability to apply the theories,
concepts, methods, and research findings that are the focus of this KAM. Such a
demonstration of your competence may be submitted along with an essay that explains
how the project illustrated a particular topic relating to intelligence, motivation, and/or
learning; its theoretical explanations; and your mastery of this area. In addition, provide a
brief rationale for the project and comment on how the situation might have changed
since the project was first undertaken and what you might do differently if you were to
plan and implement something like this again.
7. Design a hypothetical program to address one of the major issues listed above.
Include the proposal, the budget, and the selected population for pilot testing. It could be
written as a grant or business proposal.
8. A description of how a public policy was implemented, with an analysis of the role
that issues of intelligence, motivation, and learning played in forming the perspectives
represented in the debate.

*Demonstration of Competence*

This component of the KAM gives you the opportunity to put the theories and research pertaining intelligence, motivation, and learning into practice. Think in terms of developing some kind of project that addresses these issues in your setting. Your final demonstration should include both the project and up to 10 pages of reflective commentary on it, showing how the project was informed by the theories and research examined earlier in the KAM.

*Learning Resources*

The resources you will use in this component will be very specific to your particular project. If a theory or research paper is the foundation of the project, be sure to reference it.