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Global University Fall 2012 Seminar — EDU495 Article Critique -4- Caring Teachers: The Key to Student Learning Hajar Traiki A090095 Abstract The following paper is a critique of an article written by Angela Lumpkin a professor at the University of Kansas and who has an interest in teaching effectiveness. The article “ Caring Teacher: The Key to Student Learning” that will be analyzed is about the characteristics of a caring teacher who can improve and facilitate students’ learning. Teacher-students relationship is based on the human need of caring , so when students feel that their teacher respects them and cater to their interests and needs by believing in them and going an extra step to make the learning process centered on them; they will excel and their learning will improve. This analysis includes an insightful summary of the aforementioned article, and a reaction in which the strengths and weaknesses of the article are highlighted, and where suggestions and connections between the main points in the research and personal experiences are mentioned. Summary This summary provides the reader with the main ideas of the analyzed article. The three main characteristics that contribute to caring teachers will be discussed, they include: believing in students’ abilities, active engagement of students in learning process, and being reflective teachers. A caring teacher believes in the abilities of her students and expects a lot from them. Therefore she may alter her instructional plan to the better so that she benefits students by making the learning student-centered. This can be achieved by enabling students to participate in decision making, guiding students to be responsible independent learners, helping students in building their knowledge, and by helping them self monitor their learning. Another way by

which a teacher demonstrates that she cares is to enable students to be actively engaged in learning. The caring teacher uses multiple instructional strategies to cater to diverse types of students and gain their interest and motivation. In addition to that the teacher should be realistic and should have clear expectations regarding different elements of instruction (assignments, projects, exercises, tests, etc...) So, when the teacher teaches for understanding, the students will be challenged to think critically and not just memorize content. Also one of the traits of a caring teacher is to be reflective. When the teacher reflects on her teaching and examines how and why she teaches, she will find ways to facilitate and improve learning and change it to student-centered and hence will establish a caring environment by which students interact positively and respectfully. Reaction The article is beneficial for all teachers who care enough to help their students learn and acquire critical thinking skills, and not just fill their exam papers with information they memorized without having the sufficient understanding about. The study is well-organized, and gives the reader a clear explanation and examples on how to be a caring teacher. It also sheds the light on the importance of being a caring teacher who helps students be interested to learn and to have higher-order thinking skills as a result of learner-centeredness. Another important strength is that this article helps the teachers who want to care but they don't know how, those who may engage in behaviors they think represent caring but in reality it makes the environment in the classroom chaotic, so this article provides many tips that the teacher would benefit from and apply in order to foster learning in her classroom. On the other hand, some weaknesses may be that even if one

teacher read this article and was willing to make changes she may be faced by barriers some school systems put, so she may not be able to adjust her instructional plan or make modifications in the curriculum content, so her trials to make teaching interesting and student-centered may be hindered. Another weakness is that the three characteristics mentioned in the article somehow general and there should be more elaboration, also I think that many other factors that make the teacher caring were not mentioned in the article. Lastly it is obvious that the study lacks many research components (Research question, methods, etc.). In relation to my personal experience and knowledge, I would say that caring is the most quality that makes me prefer one teacher to another. Till now I can recall the names of teachers who cared for me in my childhood. For example, I would not forget my English teacher in the second grade “ Miss May" this teacher was extremely caring and till now she draws a smile on my face when I remember her; why? because when she used to teach me I entered the hospital for few days, and she was the only teacher who came and visited me and she brought me a story as a gift ( educational gift! ), also when I came back to school she helped me get along with her instruction and tutored me. This teacher will always be a role model for me, I learned from her a lot! I knew from her and from all caring teachers in my life that when students feel the genuine care of their teachers they will love the subjects those teachers teach, and will exert a big effort in studying as a result of their love for these teachers. I believe that caring is the most important element toward a successful career in teaching, therefore I am planning to be a teacher who expects a lot of her students in the range of their abilities. I should work to know their strengths

and weaknesses, and then build on their strengths and foster their learning by engaging them in learning using interesting instructional strategies, and last but not least I should always reflect on my teaching to see what's going wrong so that I improve myself, and to see what's going right to stick to it and enhance the learning process more and more to help in making productive citizens who would be great problem solvers. Reference: Lumpkin, A., (2007). Caring Teachers: The Key to Student Learning. Kappa Delta Di Record, 43(4), 158-160.