Reflective Narrative

Like the children I work with, there are multiple environmental contexts in which I have grown and developed. I have previous knowledge from my upbringing, theoretical classroom knowledge, guided internship experience, and experience in the field. Each of these has given me a different perspective on how children grow and develop and how these environments support their well-being. From my experiences, I have learned that these environments are not separate entities. They coexist and interact with each other.

One example of this is my experiences between three different classes. One was an introductory class on child development where I learned on a theoretical level that children learn best when they are interested and engaged in the material. Then, I went to a class where I did 45 hours of observation to prepare me for a credential program. Here, I observed kindergarteners being expected to learn 10 sight words a week with 100% accuracy. Many children did not like this, and it appeared to shut one boy off completely. After that experience, I felt a little disillusioned by the public school system. I felt like they were turning children off to learning. Then, I took a psychology of teaching coarse were I learned that there are reasons that children are taught words by rote memorization so early. This is when their brains are going to get the most out of it. They need to be repeatedly exposed to foundational knowledge while their brains are going through synaptic pruning in order to strengthen the connections in the brain.

When I put these together, I was able to analyze this system. Using this method is effective for many children. However, greater motivation and personal connection with the knowledge would have made the learning more meaningful. Making fun games or using sight words in stories that relate to the children would have been much more enjoyable. This sort of environment fosters life-long learning that supports a child’s well-being.

I also know that this is not the entire picture. There is also the home environment which may or may not support learning. There are enrichment activities and social circles that children belong to that also impact their growth and development. Children grow on many dimesions.

One thing I learned most about is learning about meeting the needs of children. Sometimes, this means that I need to meet my needs in order to address those of the children. I have learned that helping them when they need it while challenging them to grow, gives them the ability to develop confidence, self-esteem, and empathy. An example of this is when I was able to identify my personality as slow to warm in a writing exercise I did in a curriculum course. I realized that I easily connected with a child that was more like me, but sometimes had trouble identifying the needs of a child who had a difficult temperament. Once I was able to identify these traits, I was able to have a plan and prepare myself to be more sensitive to this child’s needs.

As a lifelong learner, I will learn to seek out more knowledge about how environmental contexts relate to children and how to apply that information in the real world. As I move into career prospects, I will identify the environments children come in contact with and learn about what I can do to support their well-being. For example, I am going to work at a preschool next semester. I know that the children experience school life, home life, community life, maybe even a religious or spiritual life. The main one I will have control over is the school life. I have previously described how to make that a developmentally appropriate experience. I also have some influence on home life through my relationships with parents and siblings. I can build a strong home to school connection and allow the parents to confide in me. As a member of the community, I can help point families to resources and opportunities. I can influence their spiritual and religious life by respecting whatever beliefs they hold and educating myself on those beliefs. That way I can be sensitive to their needs and avoids making false assumptions.

What has hindered me in learning about multiple learning contexts is that there are so many dimensions that children grow on. I feel like I am always discovering new ones and it is difficult to always see them in the bigger picture.