**SLO V. Critical Thinking**

Reflecting back on my college education, the skill that I am most thankful for gaining is the ability to think critically. I see this skill being useful in workplaces, education, and everyday situations. Critical thinking can often be the main difference between adequate workers in child development and excellent professionals in child development. I see that people without the ability to think critically often struggle when the slightest problem comes their way, which makes me very grateful for being able to apply critical thinking to situations frequently.

I have gained in my critical thinking skills by simply looking at issues from different perspectives. I have grown in this exponentially, especially regarding large cultural issues. When I was 16, I went to Uganda for a month. I saw starving children, terminal sickness, and extreme poverty. Initially, I thought the best way to help the people, and children, of Uganda as to give individuals food and money. I thought I could fix these issues with the simple solution of monetary giving. Although this may seem noble, I saw how when tourists gave children food or money, the children who receive the gifts are often robbed. Also, after talking to the local families, they expressed how Americans would come and give a little bit of food, but would leave no lasting support for the people of Uganda. As I continued to observe the culture and collect informal assessments among the local peoples, I saw that the instability of families caused incredible pain. Most children I talked to had lost one or both parents to disease, were being raised by an elderly relative, and were often taking care of younger siblings. Through looking at the Ugandan culture from other perspectives, instead of just my own, I began to think more critically about the complex and multi-faceted issues of Uganda.

Often I’ve heard people say subjective remarks about children’s home environment, motivations for exhibiting certain behaviors, and specific disabilities they have. These subjective statements are rarely based on fact and are often based on gut feelings, a selective few experiences, or personal opinions. I’ve heard such statements from moms, preschool teachers, and community members that are similar to, “He probably has autism because he has a hard time communicating with other kids” or “She is not listening because she must have no rules at home”. Having worked in a variety of environments and having received quality education, I know that making these assuming statements is not professional, and they have great potential of being incorrect.

In my special education courses, I have learned an incredible amount about the expansive field of special education. I have learned that often different disabilities have similar symptoms and that careful assessment by specialized professionals must be performed to help diagnose children. Critical thinking is necessary when diagnosing children.

Throughout a research class in child development, I gained a greater understanding and appreciation for research. I see that it is absolutely crucial in child development. As a child development professional, I will always keep up-to-date on current empirical research studies regarding the child development field.

As a professional, I will now go through all assessments, perspectives, and research that I can to promote critical thinking in my workplace. I also will use logical critical thinking on a daily basis as problems arise. The logical and research-based critical thinking has helped me become a more successful student, a better child development professional, a more educated person, and a more informed community member.