Developmental Context

Throughout my higher education in child development, I have learned that there are multiple environmental contexts that shape children’s growth and development. Analyzing environments are important because they impact children’s intellectual, physical and social emotional development. Environmental contexts that support a child’s well-being are linked to increasing the quality of life for children.

There are three different types of environments that greatly influence a child’s well-being. These environments include their physical environment, family environment and social/community environment. Within a physical environment there are three different elements that contribute to a healthy environment for a child. These important elements are: to have an adequate standard of living (including shelter, food and clothes), having safety, and to have adequate health care services. If these elements aren’t fully met, children can potentially experience hardships including hunger, homelessness and exposure to violence.

The home environment as well as the quality of parenting, also plays an important role in shaping children’s lives. To maintain an adequate family environment, children need family members that are mentally stable, responsible and are reliable to provide them love and support. Children benefit the most when they have a child-parent relationship that is based on open communication, warmth and firm discipline. I have learned that there is a correlation that children’s emotional well-being and social behavior is strongly related to the quality of their parent-child interactions. Therefore, it is important for children to develop a secure relationship with their parents at a young age.

The quality of children’s social and community environment also play an important role in their growth and development. Children are influenced by their child care, school, extracurricular activities and neighborhood. Due to the fact that children spend a substantial amount time in child care, it is important to ensure that the quality of their care is meeting the standards. Characteristics of a high quality child care include involvement with learning materials, providing intellectual stimulation and having social involvements with adults and other children. The quality of care is important because it has the ability to enhance or hinder a child’s cognitive and language development.

The safety and the quality of school are neighborhood features that are important to take in consideration for children’s development. A school environment influences a child’s behavior and academic performance. As children get older, they have more control on where they want to spend their time. Therefore, their peer groups and extracurricular activities also contribute to their development.

One particular experience that helped facilitate my growth in understanding how multiple environmental context shape children’s growth and development was my internship at the Associated Students Child Development Lab at Chico State University. When interning there, I got to interact with preschool aged children, teachers, and parents when they dropped off and picked up their children. Therefore, I got to observe many influential environments that the children were in. One thing that I learned the most from this experience is that it showed me that there are many different environments to take in consideration when analyzing a child’s well-being. As a life-long learner in the child development field, I will continue to renew my knowledge about ways to strengthen environments so that children can grow strong and prosper.