Student Learning Objective I: Foundations of Child Development

Students will demonstrate knowledge of the theoretical and empirical foundations of the discipline.

In order to have a better understanding of why children act out and display certain behaviors I have had the privilege of observing several age groups and learning about what is developmentally appropriate and what atypical behavior looks like. As I was learning about discipline I had several opportunities to observe a child and a teacher resolving problems which has opened my eyes and made me realize that there is more than one way of doing something. An example is when a toddler is screaming and yelling at another child, a teacher would step in and give the toddler the words they need to vocalize how they are feeling. Those words would consist of I need space or if the child hit another child going over the situation with them and asking each child how that made them feel. As a Child Development major I started to explore and find reasoning towards certain disciplines and relate them to the theories/foundations I have learned.

Some of the well-known theorists such as Jean Piaget or Erik Erikson have taught me to identify the developmental domains that these theories focus on. One theorist in particular, who has made a positive impact on my learning, is Albert Bandura’s, The Social Learning Theory. The social learning theory is learned through the environment by observing the actions of others. Bandura believed that children learn behaviors by observing others and imitating what they have observed. If a supervising adult observes a child imitating an action, adults may reinforce a behavior, or attempt to extinguish the behavior through punishment. For example, the teacher was engaging in a meaningful interaction with an infant and a child came up them. The teacher told the boy, “You can rub his arm”, then a couple of days later the boy came up the baby and rubbed his arm without anyone telling him what to do. The teacher positively reinforced that she liked that he rubbed the baby’s arm gently. The important thing to keep in mind is that the behavior does not matter, but the reinforcement received is what is important. As for punishment we are trying to decrease the likelihood of a behavior occurring again. What I have learned and observed is, teaching children new behaviors can increase or decrease learned behaviors that were carried out. This theory in particular helps me understand that all children are exposed to and observe how others interact. Some children may display good behaviors and others may not because of the type of environment they live in and because of the responses to their behavior they receive. Regardless of a child’s environment, children will observe good and bad behaviors. This makes me realize that I need to be a positive influence and demonstrate good behaviors so that any child observing me picks up on those good behaviors I have displayed.

Observing children and families began before I started majoring in Child Development. I knew that each family had their own unique way and personal beliefs about the way they parent. However, I noticed that when I was out in public I would see children misbehaving and I started to think of different ways a parent could of handled the situation. While observing children and families I have seen the extreme diversity caused by a variety of environments. When I do deal with children in families I try to consider their developmental context, including family relationships.

One concept that I have used several times and still consider useful in my future is the zone of proximal development. I have applied this concept when I was interning at a preschool. One of the children climbed up a ladder on the jungle gym successfully but they wanted to come back down as soon as they got to the top. I was standing nearby and the child turned around and look at me and held her arms out. I helped the child by telling her where to put her feet then move one leg down then another leg down then move her arms in opposite position; guiding her to develop a new skill. After that she felt good about herself because she was able to get down on her own without having someone pick her up and bring her to the ground. She climbed up and down the ladder on the jungle gym later on that day and I was proud of her because she did it on her own as I watched her.

As for myself, I am a visual learner so the more I am exposed to children the more I learn how to interact with the children and their families. Each and everyday I learn something new or I relearn what I was taught a couple of semesters ago. I will continue to grow in the area of the foundations of Child Development through my professional experiences.

Observational Techniques (CHLD-251) was taken at Chico State and taught me how to take an anecdotal note of a child’s behavior. What was learned from that class is to be as objective because the observer cannot assume what the child is feeling. This assignment was to take an anecdotal note on a child while she was playing. This assignment has taught how to take objective notes that can be used as empirical evidence.

For my final project in Developmentally Appropriate Curriculum for Children: Theory to Practice (CHLD-282) each student had to come up with their own curriculum for the week as well as our philosophy. The main developmental domain that I focused on was social development. I implemented curriculum that would support social development which included sharing a piece of art work the children made and outside group activities. This final project made me critically think about what if I did have my own preschool and how would I implement curriculum that is developmentally age appropriate.