Reflective Narrative SLO 5: Critical Thinking

Student Learning Objective 5: Critical Thinking: *Students will apply critical thinking and scientific methods of thinking (including logical and empirical reasoning) to issues regarding children’s well-being.*

           We believe that this student-learning objective means that students should be able to think logically and rationally about how to solve problems that hinder children’s well-being. Critical thinking also requires one to be able to apply solutions based on credible research and eliminate or be aware of personal bias in decision-making and perspectives regarding children. Being able to apply critical thinking skills is essential when addressing issues regarding children’s well being.

            We felt that many different skills go into being able to critically think. First and foremost, an individual should be able to assess a situation logically and objectively, without letting personal bias cloud his or her judgment. We also believe that in order to be able to use critical thinking skills one should be able to look at a problem from all different angles and perspectives, dig deeper into the meaning of behaviors beyond what they appear to mean on the surface, and be able to efficiently apply the steps of the scientific method, like asking questions and forming hypothesis, collecting data, analyzing, and interpreting those results to develop solutions.

            We felt that during our time as child development majors at Chico State we had multiple learning experiences that facilitated our growth in critical thinking skills. We all agreed that our course, Methods of Inquiry, which was dedicated to learning how to conduct research and draw conclusion based on research, helped our critical thinking skills evolve. From this class we learned how to determine what a credible source of information is, how to determine if study results are valid and reliable, and the meaning of statistical and practical significance. Some of us also thought that some of our internship classes facilitated our growth in critical thinking skills. Being directly involved in a classroom helped up develop problem-solving skills, and helped us learn how to think critically about issues on our feet. We also discussed how completing a Desired Results Developmental Profile helped develop our critical thinking skills, because we had to objectively observe and analyze those results.

            Some of us feel that the biggest challenge with this SLO was understanding the difference between reliability and validity. Understanding the difference between reliability and validity was initially a struggle for some of us, because they are both related to measurement and data collection and seemed to be similar concepts. However, we have learned that reliability refers to the consistency of test scores, while validity refers to the accuracy of the interpretations made from test scores.

            We all agreed that one of the best things that we have achieved in this area is learning how to research effectively, and learning how to tell if a source is credible. Learning how to research is an essential component of critical thinking because it is extremely important that we are getting credible information when dealing with issues regarding a childs’ well-being. Being able to research effectively will help us determine the best course of action when working with children in real life situations.

            As members that are about to enter the field of Child Development we believe that we can offer our ability to critically think and problem solve in professional situations in order to collaborate with others in solving problems. We also believe that we will be able to effectively research and determine what course of action to take in different situations that we might be presented with throughout our careers. We think that this program has successfully equipped us with skills to continue asking questions, research, and draw conclusions.

            We all wrote about different assignments that we felt reflected our growth in our critical thinking skills. Some of these assignments included our inquiry investigations where we asked a questions about something we observed in our classrooms working with children, and then came up with curriculum plans to implement a solution to the situation we observed. Another assignment we completed that helped us develop our critical thinking skills was the research paper that we wrote in our Methods of Inquiry class, where we were required to analyze data, collect research, and draw conclusions on issues that were related to children’s well-being. We also discussed how this major has provided us with many opportunities to complete self-reflections. We believe that this helped us develop skills in order to critically think about ourselves, and set and achieve goals for ourselves, in order to better serve children and families.