*Reflective Narrative SLO 2: Child and Environmental Assessment and Study Center.*

Child and Environmental Assessment and Study Students with demonstrate knowledge of assessment issues and perform qualitative and quantitative assessments of children and their environments.

In the field of Child Development research and assessment are required, studied, and examined. When I first started at California State University, Chico and was asked about research and assessment I didn’t have an idea what either one meant in the context of this field. When coming into this field I thought research meant identifying a certain topic on the web and then writing about the main points and ideas. As for assessment, I couldn’t really identify what it meant because at my community college I wasn’t introduced to it, due to taking general education courses. It was challenging being in upper division Child Development classes not knowing what the definitions and meanings of each of these words meant. As I took more courses I gained more knowledge not only on the types of research we use, but also how to use assessment by doing assignments geared towards evaluating children and their environments.

One way that I have grown in understanding assessment is doing assignments related to specific children. Another way I have grown in understanding assessment is when I have collected and interpreted information that I have gathered from an empirical article or study. I have also grown in this by learning about why we do assessment and who/what we assess. When speaking in terms of why we assess I have grown in understanding that we do it to evaluate individuals’ learning, understand how to meet an individuals needs, and to inform others where something is at or progress that has been made toward a goal. I have also grown in the area of assessment by understanding who/what we assess such as families, programs, individuals, groups, and organizations.

Understanding the differences between research and assessment is important because although they may seem similar, they provide different information for different purposes. For example, research includes hypothesis testing, collection analysis, and the reporting of results. The goal of research is to provide information that is new, or to replicate the original findings or previous studies, to test a hypothesis in order to gain facts, or revise principles of a theory. Assessment is information that’s provided on a child perhaps typically to evaluate developmental or academic abilities, diagnosis of a disability, and determine and create an intervention plan for services. One experience that I have that has facilitated my growth and knowledge of assessment was by doing an assignment in the class Child Development Practicum which required me to observe a specific target child and take notes. Towards the end of semester we needed to take those notes and input them into the Desired Results for Children and Families and identify where the child’s current abilities fall under when identifying a specific measure. For example, when identifying a measure it was our responsibility to distinguish if the child falls under responding earlier/later, exploring earlier/later, or building earlier. It’s important that we asses children to see where they stand in a certain measure and where they can improve.

The challenging part about assessing the child was that I wasn’t with him every day so it was difficult to gather sufficient information with the two days I was in the classroom. Another challenging part of assessing my target child was that I only did it for a semester, and children change overtime not just in a semester. So, with that being said it was hard to gather the proper and efficient information for this certain child. Another assignment that has facilitated my growth in my knowledge of assessment was the in the class Issues in Assessment for Children and Families. The assignment we had to do was use the manual we were assigned (Infant/Toddler or Preschool) and observe teachers and how they engaged and interacted with the children. We then had to assess the teachers on a scale from 1-5 under the measures Relational Climate, Teacher Sensitivity, Facilitated Exploration, and Early Language Support. This was done 5 times with different teachers and a time span of fifteen minutes for each teacher. The challenge with doing this assignment was that we only had fifteen minutes to gather as much information on how the teacher interacted with the child and then assess them on the scale.

The one most important thing I have learned about assessment is that when assessing qualitative and quantitative it’s important to remember that qualitative research doesn’t require or have number involved while quantitative does. An area of assessment that I have struggled to understand is why do we need to collect the data from a study from multiple sources and methods? I don’t understand why we need to do this if they contain similar information in the same article. Although learning about research and assessment can be difficult/challenging it’s important in the field of Child Development to understand the development children.