The Environment Plays a Role

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Children impact the lives of those around them and while children are changing lives, the environment is playing a role in theirs. As children develop, what and who they are surrounded by might help or hinder that development and be predictive of their future achievements. The importance of environment on children is far greater then many realize.

According to Ferguson, Cassells, MacAllister and Evans (2013) the impact on children from the environment is lifelong. The trajectory of where an individual might end up may have ties all the way back to the environment of their childhood. Their home, neighborhood, school, family habits, and location all can play key roles in the life of the child when they are an adult. T Ferguson, Cassells, MacAllister and Evans (2013) look into many different things that can impact children and their environment things form air pollution and natural light in the classroom to noise and how crowed the classroom is. In their research they find how small improvements can change the outcomes of where children end up or how the changes can improve small things like test scores and school attendance. For a child who is trying to make a better future for themselves that could make all the difference.

The quality of the environment impacts many different areas of development if the different areas of development are not stimulated then the child will not have the opportunity to rise to their full potential, children may be placed in situations that they are over stimulated and this will hinder their desire to participate in social interactions. There are many factors that can lead to hindering development; for example, families that have a lower income will be unable to place their children in the best school or the children might not have enough food to eat. In addition to income, language is also one of the factors that can hinder development if a person is placed in a school where they are not being taught in their first language they may lose their motivation to communicate and learn.

In this study the researchers used the Classroom Assessment Scoring System(CLASS) (La Paro, Hamre, Pianta, 2012) to evaluate the toddler room in the Associated Student Child Development Lab(ASCDL). This research looks at the interactions in the environment for children ages 15 -36 months. The CLASS measures effective teacher-child interactions, the positive and negative interactions, and helps to create a language to teach others about what is effective in the classroom and how to make improvements. The CLASS rates on in these eight domains: Positive climate, Negative climate, Teacher sensitivity, Regard for all child perspectives, Behavior guidance, Facilitation of learning & development, Quality of feel back, and Language modeling. Those who want to use the class must attend the training and be impartial and fairly assess interactions. It is also best for two individuals to be assessing the classroom at the same time (La Paro, Hamre, Pianta, 2012).

Research that looks into the interactions can help to provide feedback or assess the strengths and weaknesses of a classroom. The interactions in a classroom can set the tone for learning and help to encourage development in the classroom. This research looks in to the interactions at the ASCDL and the impact that it is having on their development.

**Method**

The researchers proctored the CLASS (La Paro, Hamre, Pianta, 2012) at the Associated Student Child Development Lab in the Toddler room; California State University: Chico. They went in for two sessions one afternoon from 3-4:30pm there was three adults and four children. The afternoon consisted of free play both inside and out and some music and movement that was unstructured. The 2nd session of observation in the morning from 8-9:30am there was six adults and eleven children. The children were arriving and being offered breakfast in addition to unstructured art and fine motor activities. They each observed a total of six times each for fifteen minutes, fifteen minutes apart. The children were observed through a camera and microphone system and did not know that researchers were observing them.

**Results**

The following information was gathered and scored. The information is set up for comparison and further interpretations.

Observer #1(Bethany Vader) and Observer #2 (Cicilia Martinez)

PM =3 -4:30 AM =8-9:30

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Domains | #1  pm | #2  pm | #1  pm | #2  pm | #1  pm | #2  pm | #1  am | #2  am | #1  am | #2  am | #1  am | #2  am | Ave. |
| Positive Climate | 6 | 6 | 6 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 5 | 7 | 6 | 7 | 6 | 7 | 6.4 |
| Negative Climate | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Teacher sensitivity | 6 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 4 | 7 | 5 | 7 | 6 | 7 | 5.8 |
| Regard for all child perspectives | 6 | 6 | 6 | 5 | 6 | 6 | 5 | 7 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 5.9 |
| behavior guidance | 5 | 7 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 5 | 7 | 5 | 6 | 5 | 6 | 5.4 |
| facilitation of learning & development | 5 | 7 | 6 | 2 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 7 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 7 | 5.5 |
| Quality of feed back | 7 | 7 | 4 | 4 | 5 | 7 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 5.8 |
| Language development | 4 | 6 | 4 | 5 | 5 | 6 | 4 | 7 | 5 | 6 | 6 | 7 | 5.4 |
| Reliability | .5 |  | .5 |  | .625 |  | .25 |  | .5 |  | .375 |  | 0.46 |

The inter-rater reliability average was 0.46. My partner and I had similar answers and if they were different, it was generally only by one point. The areas that are different by a gap greater then two points are in the area of Teacher sensitivity I gave a 4 and my partner gave a seven. Another place that this happens is in the area of Facilitation of learning & development I gave a six and my partner gave a two. The last place that this happens is in the area of Language development, I gave a four, and my partner gave a seven.

**Discussion**

The CLASS (La Paro, Hamre, Pianta, 2012) provides information about interactions for the eight domains. The results for the ASCDL are discussed in this section. For positive climate the results showed many signs that the teachers and children enjoyed spending time with one another. The children seemed to be good natured and were smiling and making faces with the teachers. The atmosphere in the classroom is happy and the staff and students looked excited to be there. The teachers show respect for the children and have good communication with the children using calming and warm tones.

In the area of negative climate the teachers and child interactions showed that the teachers did not use harsh tones with the children. There was no yelling or calling of names. The children were never treated negatively or were caused any physical harm. The teachers showed kindness and encouraged the child. The children in the environment showed very little negativity along with minimal fighting or displays of frustration.

Teacher sensitivity was reflected in the attention that the teachers paid to their students and the response time that it took for the teachers to respond the teachers seems to be fairly attentive to the children and those in the classroom provided comfort to the children and talked to them about their emotions and what was happening in the classroom. children were being held and talked to. The most children in the classroom seemed comfortable to seek attention and help from the teacher.

In the results for regard for child perspectives score the teachers scored very high they encourage child directed activities. They find ways for the children to explore and make projects their own. The teachers in the classroom are very go with the flow and the children are free to discover and ask questions and interact with their peers and teachers. The children are given choices and are supported in their quest to be independent. The teachers are there assisting the children and ensuring their safety.

The teacher and child interaction for behavior guidance results showed that the teachers set clear guidelines for the children and the guidelines are to keep the children safe. The teachers are actively watching behavior and helping to guide and encourage children to make safe choices. Also to think about what the other children in the classroom are thinking or feeling. The children are redirected to new activities and are positively reinforced with words of praise for making safe choices. The children in the classroom did wonder a around but were quickly helped to find an activity and become involved.

For the facilitation of learning and development the teachers in the classroom were engaged with the children for some of the time and intentionally were involved with them. Working on developmentally appropriate activities most of the time teachers spend their time wisely most of the time. Teachers in the classroom connected most things to learning and problem solving and the children we mostly involved.

Quality of feed back given by the teachers was helpful to the children and to the other teachers in the room. The teachers provided direction and opportunities to ask questions about what was happening and what a next step might be. The teachers in the classroom provided the children with information that helped to provide understanding and further interest. The teachers encourage the children in their efforts and are clear about what they liked about the child accomplishments to build their self worth.

Language modeling in the classroom was teacher controlled most of the time. The children were provided opportunity to speak and the teacher extended or repeated the child’s word to gain understanding. The teachers had things labeled in the classroom and use a variety of language with the children.

In the development of a child, we are looking to help them learn and understand the world around them. With providing them with a positive climate, quality feedback, and the other domains we are build in their independence and helping them to feel comfortable to explore and find their place. Children are always learning from their interaction with the environment and how they are interacting will help to shape their development and give them future with more opportunities.

My partner and I disagreed on three sections and I think that this was because we were watching a room with more then one teacher and ended up watching different teachers. For some situations, we might have perceived the teacher as being more or less helpful. In most cases, I think that I scored with a glass half empty and she scored with a glass half full. I have a lot of experience with children and what makes a positive environment for them. I have high expectation for the ASCDL and that might have made my scores a bit lower then my partners scores. I was biases because of the amount that I have worked with children I know that the teacher in the room are doing a great job and that I tended to make excuses for some of the teachers reactions to the children or each other. I have worked with children since I was in the 7th grade so in a way I feel like I can see how people can be better but am sympathetic to their situation. My partner and I needed to communicate more before hand and come up with a plan of who and what we were watching for. That way we would be taking more of the same notes.

It was interesting to use the Class Scoring system I found new ways of looking at things in the environment and how they make an impact. I also liked relating this all to development and how to connect the child to their environment. I never realized how much every part of a child life is impacting their future opportunities.

References

Ferguson, K. T., Cassells, R. C., MacAllister, J. W., &Evans, G. W. (2013). The physical environment and child development: An international review*. International Journal Of Psychology, 48(4)*, 437-468.

Paro, K., Hamre, B., & Pianta, R. (2012). *Classroom assessment scoring system (CLASS) manual, toddler* (1st ed., p. 2). Baltimore, Maryland: Brookes publishing company.

**CHLD 440: Partner Evaluation**

This evaluation focuses on your experience with the Environmental Assessment Assignment. Take time to respond to these questions in a thoughtful manner. Use complete sentences in formulating your narrative responses. This document will be read **only** by your course instructor.

Name: Bethany Vader Partner: Cecilia Martinez

**What did you do to prepare yourself for the assignment**?

I read portions of the class manual. I read through the assignment and made arrangements to observe in the ASCDL .

**Give one specific example of something from this assignment that you learned from your partner(s) that you probably would not have learned or thought about yourself.**

I do not like to give people full credit. I always see room or improvement even if it is minimal. My partner gave many more sevens then I did and that stuck out to me. It is ok to give people credit where it is due and not look for the improvement they can make.

**Give one specific example of something from this assignment that your partner(s) learned from you that (s)he (they) probably would not have thought about or learned otherwise.**

We talked about the environment during one of our breaks and I said that I liked how the outside area was and she wondered why and I was about to share about my other experiences in classroom and how I thought the toddler room had a nice set up. I think that she maybe learned a little more about how the set up can guide children’s behavior

**How did you and your partner(s) work together in terms of cooperation and effort?**

We talked about what times were good for us to come and made changes as needed. We sent each other our scores and talked a bit about how to set up our table

**What were your strengths in working as a team? What were your challenges in working as a team?**

We are both very low stress and I think that was both our strength and weakness because it made things happen at the last minute but nigher of us wer that worried about it.

**What did you personally contribute to the process of completing the observation?**

I took notes and scored my score cards six times. I showed up on time and stayed until I was finished

**Is there anything you could you have done to improve your contribution to the assignment?**

We should have traded contact information sooner. Then we could have helped each other more.