

Reflective Narrative SLO 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.

Narrative Purpose: This student learning outcome focuses on analyzing and evaluating a child's environment and their behavior and finding ways on how to improve it.

I think what comprises critical thinking skills and abilities is being able to analyze research (qualitative and quantitative) as well as identifying main issues or questions. After identifying the main issues, it is best to continue digging beyond the surface to gather information and evaluate the credibility of information. I think to critically think about something, it takes time and experience and that it is something that you have to work on gradually. After finding the answers and analyzing the results, it is important to see what the strengths and weaknesses are to your findings and how it benefits the children through these results.

The experiences that helped me learn how to critically think were through my methods of inquiry in child development class. Within this course we designed a research proposal and focused our attention on how we were going to conduct a study and provide a rationale for the study. We focused on gathering information and evaluating the credibility of the information through qualitative and quantitative data. We also had to develop a research design plan based on scientific methods and criteria to figure out who we were going to focus our research on as well as how many people would participate. In this paper, we had to be sure that there was no bias and that it was a representative sample of the population as a whole. To ensure this in my research paper, I provided a random sample of participants who were either currently attending preschool or those who were not attending preschool. I also gathered objective information about children and learned how to analyze data within my observation techniques class where I

learned how to observe and analyze children through a check list of all of their skills at the stage of development that they were currently in.

What I have struggled with in this area is evaluating information. I am not really good at it, but through this major I have made improvements. I find it hard to stay unbiased when observing children, but through this major it has given me the opportunity to write objective notes. These notes allow me to understand what stage of development the child is in and allows me to gather data on how to make improvements within their environment.

The best of what I have achieved in this area is understanding how much work and time is put into analyzing and doing research on children. Before taking these classes, I didn't know any of these theorists or had any explanation of how to describe the process of a child's development. I feel like most people see what is on the surface such as helping children through conflicts and teaching how to do certain skills. However child development is so much more than that. I have achieved understanding that one can critically analyze a classroom environment in order to improve it and help their students excel. In this area, it has helped me to be more observant and pay more attention to detail such as in the child's environment to benefit the children as a whole.

As a member of the child development profession, I can offer creative and new ideas through the new research that I hear about to support evidence based practices. I'm also very knowledgeable about how children development physically, cognitively, and socio-emotionally through my hands on experiences in my internships. Through this, I think I will be able to contribute and collaborate well with other child development professionals. I have learned how to communicate with children, how to handle conflicts between children, and how to critically analyze situations in order to benefit children as a whole.

Assignments

In my observation techniques class, I had to observe a child throughout the whole semester and analyze her development at that stage in her life through my checklists. This was the beginning stages of critically thinking for me and I learned how to take notes objectively. In this specific assignment, I am describing a child's psychomotor skills from what I have observed of her doing within her preschool classroom. Here I am saying through what I saw and analyzed on my developmental checklist of her in an objective manner. These were things that I was told to look for when examining the child and was the beginning step to critical thinking. This assignment taught me how to be more objective and I learned how to take notes in an unbiased way without assumptions.

In my methods of inquiry in child development class, I was given the opportunity of developing a research proposal to find out if children develop better social skills if they go to preschool compared to those who do not go to preschool. I had to identify a main issue and then gather information through the raised questions. Within the assignment, I developed my own surveys, qualitative, and quantitative data. I then had to analyze how to keep the information unbiased and that it applied to the whole population. I also had to analyze how I would be able to get that information and how I would critically think about the information that I received. I would then come to conclusions through my findings and examine the results for a solution. Unlike in the first assignment that I did, I didn't have to find specific things from a checklist that was given to me. This time I was able to come up with my own research topic, choose what data methods I would like to measure, and then analyze and critically think about my findings. This assignment also taught me how to be open-minded and to not make assumptions based on my findings.

