Triad Essay

What you learned about yourself as a teacher.

The thing that surprised me the most about this teaching was that I found it very hard not to tell the learner the answer or to direct their learning. When I was growing up I feel that so much of the learning done was teacher directed, so that is what I am used to. Furthermore, I have never practiced this type of teaching in my other classes, so this way of teaching was new to me. By the end of the triad I found that I really like this way of teaching because it lets the learner really experiment all aspects of the lesson without being directed by the teacher. Furthermore, when the student figured out the problem I felt very proud as a teacher because I watched her go through a process to figure out the problem without my help. I feel this way of learning can really boost a child’s self-confidence and self-esteem because at the end of the lesson they realized they have achieved something challenging.

What I did differently than my peers as a teacher is that when the learner was working on the problem, I was taking notes along with the observer. However, my notes were different from the observer because instead of writing down everything the learner was doing, I wrote down what challenges she had and how I could present the environment differently next time so that learning would be more conducive for her. Doing this really helped me a lot because it was a lot easier for me to specify what problems the learner was having right then and there rather than to think about it two days later. Furthermore, I then compared my notes to the observer’s to make
sure she confirmed what she wrote down as well. This strategy was different than my peers and it really helped me as a teacher because taking the notes myself during the triad really triggered my memory for later use.

The main challenge and stumbling block I found as a teacher was that my learner was closed minded and I did not even realize it until toward the end of the triad because she was not thinking out loud, rather she was thinking in her head, so I could not hear what she was thinking. For example, toward the end of the last triad she was trying to think of all the possible answers. She drew the right answer on paper, but then she scribbled it out without even testing it because she automatically did not think it would work. The challenge for me as a teacher was how to get her to try out that answer without actually hinting or giving it away that it was the right answer. How I made sense of this was that I realized I do the same thing, too. For example, sometimes when I come across a problem I rule out some possibilities right away because they seem like too much work. This made me realize that as a teacher I need to encourage my students not to rule anything out because anything is possible! This will also help my students to develop a more open mind.

There are many things I have learned as a teacher during this triad that can be applied to my early childhood teaching career. For example, during this triad I sat back and I let the learner explore and understand the ideas and events of the problem which promoted sustained shared thinking. Furthermore, Lindon states, "The team linked this observation with the importance of a learning environment that enables a great deal of child-initiated and chosen activities, rather than a balance towards
adult-led” (175). As a future practitioner I want to be able to do this with the children in my class and create a classroom environment where the activities are child-initiated rather than adult-led. I also feel as a teacher that this type of learning fosters self-esteem. For example, when I was a child whenever I figured out a problem by myself rather than having the teacher tell me the answer, my self-esteem boosted because I felt a sense of accomplishment. As a future teacher I hope to foster self-esteem in my students because “self-esteem progresses hand in hand with the rest of their development” (Lindon, 102).

What you learned about yourself as a learner.

What surprised me about learning this way is that I found that I did not really like it. I felt confused a lot of the time because I did not really know what I was to be looking for or if I was even on the right track during this triad. I think I felt this way because during my academic career I never learned this way and my learning was always directed by the teacher, so I always knew what to look for and that eventually helped me to figure out the answer without ever experimenting with the problem myself. I found I was frustrated a lot during my time as a learner because of the fact that I did not know exactly what I was supposed to be looking for.

My learning appeared to be different than my peers because I realized I never wanted to say what I was thinking out loud because I was not sure if it was the right answer or not. I was unsure of myself as a learner and a lot of the time I was spent as a learner was in silence because I was only thinking in my head rather than out loud. I think this also relates back to my own personal experience growing up because I feel
so much of learning was focused on getting the "right answer" rather than the process spent on getting that answer. Therefore, I think this is why I was so hesitant to say what I was thinking and it was different than the other learners because a lot of the time they thought out loud rather than just in their head.

The challenges I came across as a learner was a misunderstanding of the problem. For example, at the beginning of the lesson the teacher presented me with several different sentences. I thought these sentences were all promoting the same problem, but I realized in the end they all had different problems. So, I spend the entire triads trying to figure out only one problem and how that one problem looked in all of the sentences. I was frustrated when I figured this out because it would have been a lot easier if I had known they were all different problems instead of just focusing on one. I felt like I wasted my time because I was looking for something that was not there. I made sense of these challenges by referring back to finding only one “right answer”. I feel like that type of learning has hindered me because it is what I am used to rather than focusing on the process of learning.

What I learned as a learner applies to my practice as an early childhood educator because as an educator I want to focus on the process the students go through to get the right answer rather than focusing on getting the one “right answer”. As a future practitioner, I want my students to talk through their thinking out loud and not be afraid to do it. I want my students to experience an intellectual search which is “a sustained conversation, led by the children’s own questions, in which they work to make sense of an event or idea” (Lindon, 172). I think if children
are not afraid to do this they will better understand their own learning because of the fact they are directing their own learning without focusing too much on getting the “right answer”.

**What you learned about learners.**

Based on this triad experience, the general observations I can make about learning is that when students construct their own knowledge without being directed by the teacher, their sense of accomplishment and self-esteem is greater because they feel they have accomplished something on their own without being directly directed by the teacher. Furthermore, this type of learning focuses more on the process the students go through rather than getting the “right answer”.

Those implications described above have a profound impact on myself as a teacher because I think about learning differently now that I have experienced this triad process. As a teacher I think it is more important to focus on the process children go through when figuring out a problem. For example, when I was growing up, I cannot ever remember a teacher focusing on the process we went through to get an answer. They were always just looking for the “right answer”. In my classroom I want my students to be able to think freely and really experiment with the process of learning.

I do not think subject matter affects learning if the subject matter is at the right level for students. I think this because the learners in my triad group all went through the same process regardless of what we were learning. We all were trying to figure out a problem, but the focus was not on the “right answer”, rather the focus
was on the process we went through. Therefore, if the focus is on the process, then the subject matter should not matter because the focus is not on the "right answer".

What I learned applies to my practice as an early childhood educator because I realize now that the subject matter I teach should not matter if the focus is on the developmental process my students go through. This ties into the intellectual search Lindon describes (172) because if the focus is on the process of learning children go through, then very much of the conversation should stem from the children’s own questions.

What you learned about teaching.

Based on this experience, the general observations I can make about teaching are that it is a lot harder to sit back and let the students lead their own thinking. A lot of the time teachers are too quick to jump in, and by doing that they hinder the process of learning children go through when trying to figure out a problem. Furthermore, I realized that teachers can be used as a tool for helping the children’s process rather than just a person who gives answers. For example, when I was growing up if you got stuck on a problem the teachers would usually just give you the right answer. Now, I realize that you can still help children get on the right path just by asking them certain questions to promote their thinking. This leads in to the different implications these observations have for me as a teacher because I realize that I can help students through the process of learning simply by asking them questions rather than telling them the answer.
I do not really think the subject matter affected teaching directly because if the focus is on the process the learner goes through, there is no right answer. I feel that you could throw any problem in there and still have teaching be the same because the teacher simply helps the student through the developmental process of thinking and learning.

What I learned applies to my practice as an early childhood educator because by guiding children through the process of learning I am helping them work within their zone of proximal development (Lindon, 179). Guiding the students this way will continually challenge them as well as help them to explore the learning environment.

**Explain the connections you observed between observations, assessment, learning, and teaching.**

From my own experience of experiencing these three different roles, I do not think one more process is more important than the other. I think of all the parts as being equal because to be a good teacher you need to understand how students learn. Furthermore, you also need to be a reflective practitioner and to be able to observe students well. This can go vice versa for being a learner and an observer as well. All three of these processes are critically important to each other because I believe they influence each other just the same. For example, all my learning growing up has influenced how I will be as a teacher because I remember what worked and what did not as a learner. Furthermore, throughout my collegiate career I have continually learned that I need to be a reflective practitioner which makes observation equally important as well.
The implications this understanding has for my practice as an early childhood educator are that I need to be aware of how I felt as a learner because I am sure that my students will feel much of the same way. As a teacher I need to focus on the developmental process my students go through rather than them finding the answer. As a teacher I need my students to lead their own intellectual search (Lindon, 176). Furthermore, Lindon states, “In order to promote sustained shared thinking, adults have to listen and contribute to a proper conversation” (Lindon, 176). Therefore, in order to promote sustained shared thinking in my students I need them to feel comfortable enough to ask questions and lead their own experiences with a problem. Observing also plays into my practice as an early childhood educator because observing allows me to see the process a child goes through when thinking out a problem. These key observations will help me become a better teacher as well as a better learner because I can transfer the information I have learned from one area to another.