Which is more important: formal or nature-based education in early childhood?

Group Members

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Word Count: 925

**1. Philosophical Question: Justification of Development**

Which is more important: formal or nature-based education in early childhood?

After much deliberation, and many worthwhile suggestions, a philosophical question was formed. It was inspired by the course readings, which offered many interesting issues for discussion. Members put forward a variety of questions, which were then merged to concentrate on the main topics of interest (see Appendix).

The specification of “early childhood” in the question was added for the sake of brevity in the dialogue.

The importance of a nature-based educational approach was strongly favoured at first within the group, as members were interested in the theorists that promoted this approach. Locke was an inspiration in that he emphasised learning by example over formal learning (Johnson & Reed, 2008, p. 66). Rousseau was highly influential by advocating nature over traditional schooling from an early age (Gutek, 2011, p. 142).

The group concurred that the question was philosophical in nature, due to the open-ended nature of the question, and the many and varied answers available. This broad range of responses depended on variants such as opinion, experience, or individual situation. After a lengthy discussion it was agreed that a balance of both with the scales tipped slightly towards nature would be best in this instance.

The importance of these issues was felt by group members who empathised through past and present experience as parents and educational staff, and felt it related to future teaching practice, with the balance of curriculum and pedagogy that would be planned for classrooms and individual learners.

**2. Capturing the Process of the Inquiry**

In the development of the philosophical question members of the group came together by communicating and meeting in the forums and Blackboard rooms. The inquiry process and development of the group’s question involved members coming together initially with ideas of possible questions resulting from the course reading materials. The group then took the inquiry process further by discussing these possible questions and developing an outline of a question which sparked most interest within the group.

At this time, theorist’s views where linked into the conversation in regards to formal versus nature in education. This subsequently led to the building and development of the question in its current form. During the discussion not all members of the group shared the same views. However the group concluded that tailoring learning to the specific needs of the children, whether in a formal or nature based environment, should form the basis of quality education.

Through this inquiry personal views and experiences were also shared and thoughts in regards to formal versus nature were challenged. Through the combination of personal experience and the theorist views, it allowed for a better understanding of the question and assisted in the early stages of the development of the group’s own personal philosophies.

**3. Reflecting on your inquiry: Your learning and conclusions**

In conclusion to the philosophical question “which is more important: formal or nature based education in early childhood?”, it was believed that nature based education would be ideal however this requires a specialised setting that is free from environmental influences and societies’ pre-assumed assumptions about education. The group also concluded that formal education should be included as this will be used in primary and secondary education and that children should also be familiar with this type of learning which will benefit them later in life.

As a group it was decided to develop meanings to the terms ‘nature’ and ‘formal education’ to help understand the question thoroughly.

*Nature* - child initiated personalised learning that is meaningful and understood by the child.

*Formal education* - instruction decided by others, in a consistent manner that delivers the same to all levels and students.

The Early Years Learning Framework was referenced and it was decided that a nature based learning approach would best meet the outcomes set out in this document.

*“Learning* - a natural process of exploration that children engage in from birth as they expand their intellectual, physical, social, emotional and creative capacities. Early learning is closely linked to early development” (Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, 2009, p. 46).

**4: How the Inquiry process may be improved.**

The question was sufficiently philosophical as it did not have a right or wrong answer. It was an inquiry as to what was of more importance: nature-based or formal education, which initiated great discussion.

The group dissected the question into two parts, natural and formal, and then discussed the advantages and disadvantages of each. Next they identified theorists who could relate to either the nature-based or formal education argument.

The major change the group would make for the next reflection is better use of time. Progress was slow at first on the forums, however, once the plan and question were formed, the whole group made positive contributions. Another change the group would make is to switch roles for the next reflection. All group members were involved in the discussions, then were designated to the part of the assignment they preferred to write. In the next reflection, the group will change sections. A further difference in the next reflection will be the availability of group members at certain times, as some will be on Professional Experience, so adjustments will be necessary in order to complete the assignment.

To improve the process of the inquiry for next time, the group will need to engage in a deeper discussion of the question as there were many points of the argument that the whole group agreed on, rather than debated.

References

Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations. (2009). *Belonging, being and becoming – the early years learning framework for Australia.*Retrieved from http://foi.deewr.gov.au/system/files/doc/other/belonging\_being\_and\_becoming\_the\_early\_years\_learning\_framework\_for\_australia.pdf

Gutek, G. L. (2011). Jean-Jacques Rousseau: Prophet of Naturalism. In *Historical and Philosophical Foundations of Education: A Biographical Introduction* (5th ed., pp. 138-156). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc.

Johnson, T. W., & Reed, R. F. (2008). John Locke. In *Philosophical Documents in Education* (3rd ed., pp. 64-71). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc.

**EDC1300 – OLCLG 39 – MODULE 1 GROUP REFLECTION ASSIGNMENT**

**PHILOSOPHICAL QUESTION – MIND MAP OF CONCEPTION**

🡻 The questions that we started with, inspired by the readings. 🡻

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Are children born good, neutral or bad? | Nature vs. Nurture | Is education of utmost importance in a child's life? | Is the implementation of Individual learning styles important in education? |
| Is formal education more important/beneficial than life long or wide learning? | When does education begin?? | Does a good education lead to a good society? | To what extent should learning be tailored or adapted to the individual? |
| Which is more important lifelong or life wide education? | Is it feasible to tailor learning to the individual? | Is education something we need to survive and evolve as humans? | When does education begin? |

🡻🡻🡻 What aspects are we interested in exploring further? 🡻🡻🡻

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Education, & definition of education | Formal vs. nature. | Childhood vs. lifelong learning | Relevant learning age of the child, time, etc.? |

🡻🡻 Merging our interests into one question. 🡻🡻

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Is there too much importance put on formal education in early childhood rather than life-long learning? | What is the importance of education in a formal vs. natural setting |

🡻 The final question, after fine-tuning: 🡻

Which is more important: formal or nature-based education in early childhood?

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Exemplary** (3.5-4) | **More than Satisfactory** (3- 3.4) | **Satisfactory (**2.5 -2.9) | **Emergent** (2 – 2.4) | **Unsatisfactory (**0-1.9) |
| **Justify the Development of the Question**  **3.5 /4** | Philosophical question **development** **explained and justified** to show how **ideas** extended and connect to theorists | Philosophical question **development** **explained** to show how **ideas** extended and connect to theorists | Philosophical question **development** **described** to show how ideas **further t**hinking, and **describes** connection to theorists | Philosophical question **identified** that shows whatthinking has occurredand **connection to theorists** | Philosophical question **not** identified and ideas are not connecting thinking or to theorists. |
| **Process of Inquiry**  **2/4** | **Explain** and **justify** how group member ideas engaged with others **Explain** relevance of discussions to theorists  **Explain** and **justify** the direction of inquiry and new insights that emerged  **Explain** how ideas were challenged. | **Explain** how group member ideas engaged with others **Explain** relevance of discussions to theorists  **Explain** direction of inquiry and new insights that emerged  **Explain** how ideas were challenged. | **Discuss** how group member ideas engaged with others **Describe** relevance of discussions to theorists  **Describe** direction of inquiry and insights that emerged  **Describe** how ideas were challenged. | **Outline** how group member ideas engaged with others  **Outline** relevance of discussions to theorists  **Identified** direction of inquiry, an outline only of insights  **Outline** how ideas challenged | How group members engaged with others **not** **outlined**  No outline of  Relevance of discussion to theorists  No outline of direction of neither inquiry nor insights gained.  How ideas were shared not outlined |
| **Group Reflection on what you have learned**  **2 /4** | **Explain** and **justify** understandings of theorists and concepts  **Explain** and **Interpret** community of inquiry conclusions | **Explain** understandings of theorists and concepts  **Explain** and **Interpret** community of inquiry conclusions | **Describe** understanding of theorists and concepts  **Describe** community of inquiry conclusions and reason for conclusions drawn. | **Outline** understanding of theorists and concepts  **Outline** community of inquiry conclusions.  2 | Understanding of theorists and concepts  **not** **outlined**  Community of inquiry conclusions **not** **outlined** |
|  | 3 | 2.5 | 2 | 1.5 | 0-1 |
| **Improvements**    **3/3** | **Explain** and **justify** improvements to inquiry process | **Explain** improvements to inquiry process | **Discuss** improvements to inquiry process. | **Outline** improvements to inquiry process. | Improvement to inquiry not discussed. |

**Mark: 10.5/15**

**Comments:**

Dear Group 39:

Good work on the whole for your first collaborative inquiry. There are a few points to consider for future inquiries:

* Your definitions of what you consider to be ‘Nature’ and ‘Formal education’ would have been better in section 1 and would have set the context for the discussions.
* Your mind map usefully illustrated good thinking through of your question.
* Good reflection on process and how the group might work more efficiently next time.
* Some reference to specific theorists and how they relate to your inquiry would demonstrate how you have considered what the theorists have to say – see in-text comments.
* Also, some mention of specific theorists in relation to what you have learned would be helpful. Refer to the marking rubric and include the requirements noted there.