

Professional Learning Communities Enhance Health Knowledge and Teaching Practice in Early Childhood Educators



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SELF-EFFICACY

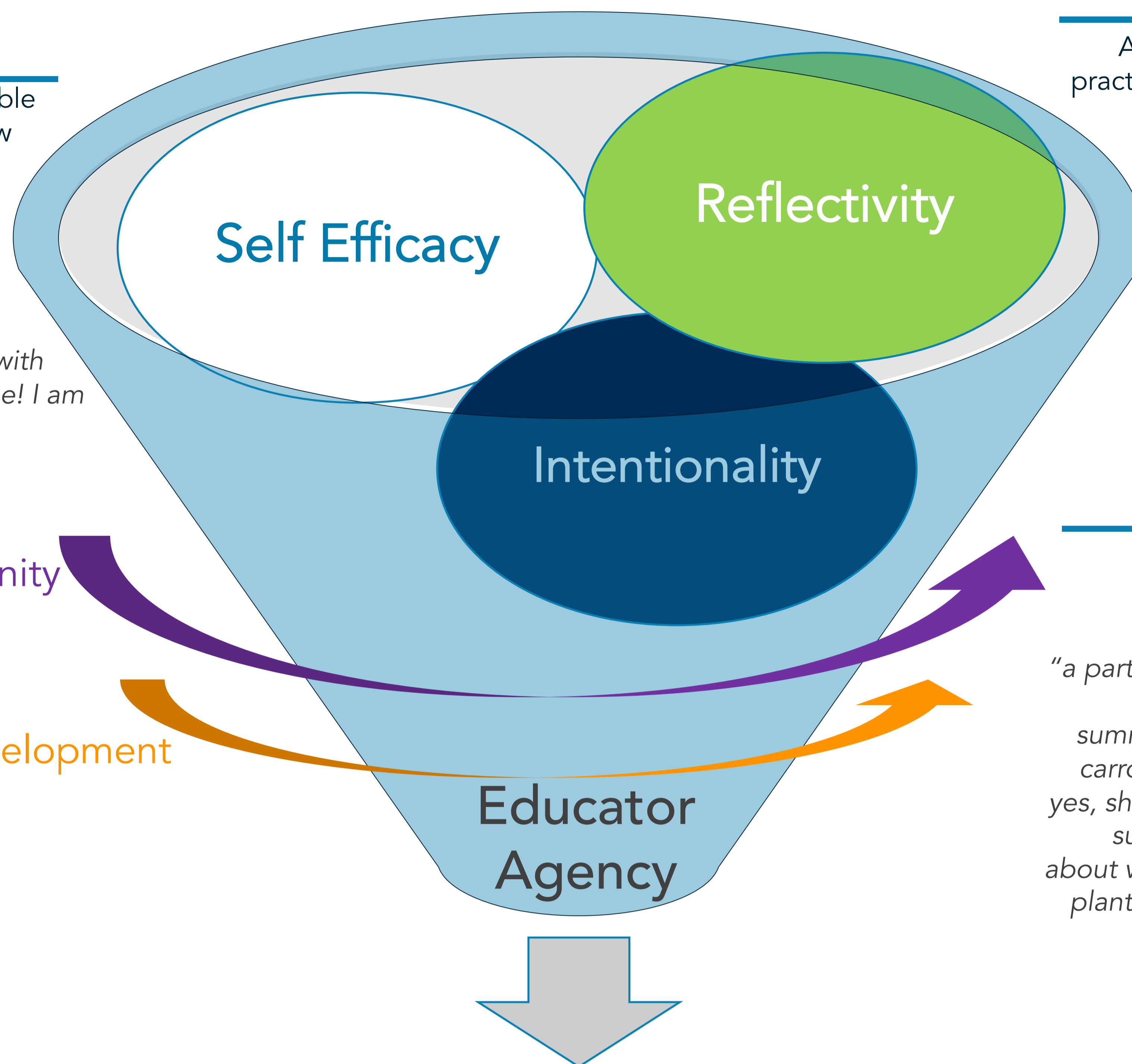
A belief in one's self to be capable of taking effective action on new knowledge and best practice.¹

"One of the things that came up right from the very beginning was open face cups for infants. I tried to get my director and my staff on board with that one, and that is a tough one! I am still working on them."

REFLECTIVITY

A thinking about one's professional practice in light of new knowledge and best practice.¹

"I [think] we spend too much time doing what we need to do for accreditation inside and not using nature [for] incorporat[ing] more physical activities."



INTENTIONALITY

One's own rationale, thoughtful planning to implement new knowledge and best practice.¹

"a particular volunteer, she is going to do planters and things like that for summertime ...[the] children would like carrots and maybe beans, and she said yes, she will take care of all of that for the summer to get the children involved about where the things come from and to plant them, and so she is on the ball for that - I am so happy!"

Learning Community

Professional Development

Educator Agency

Early childhood educator agency connects to implementation of best health practice.

Background

- Nutrition and physical activity health knowledge of early childhood educators (ECE) is variable and inconsistent.²
- Educators' perspectives need to be valued. PD must interweave new knowledge within the context of pre-existing knowledge.³

Methods & Participants

- Participants
- Educator ~ 8 yrs experience
 - n=25 female
- Professional Development
- 6-months
 - Dietitian consultation
 - Blended delivery learning modules
 - Community of practice sessions
- Analysis
- Focus group semi-structured interviews
 - Content analysis for emergent themes
 - Thematic coding by LL and MY

Discussion

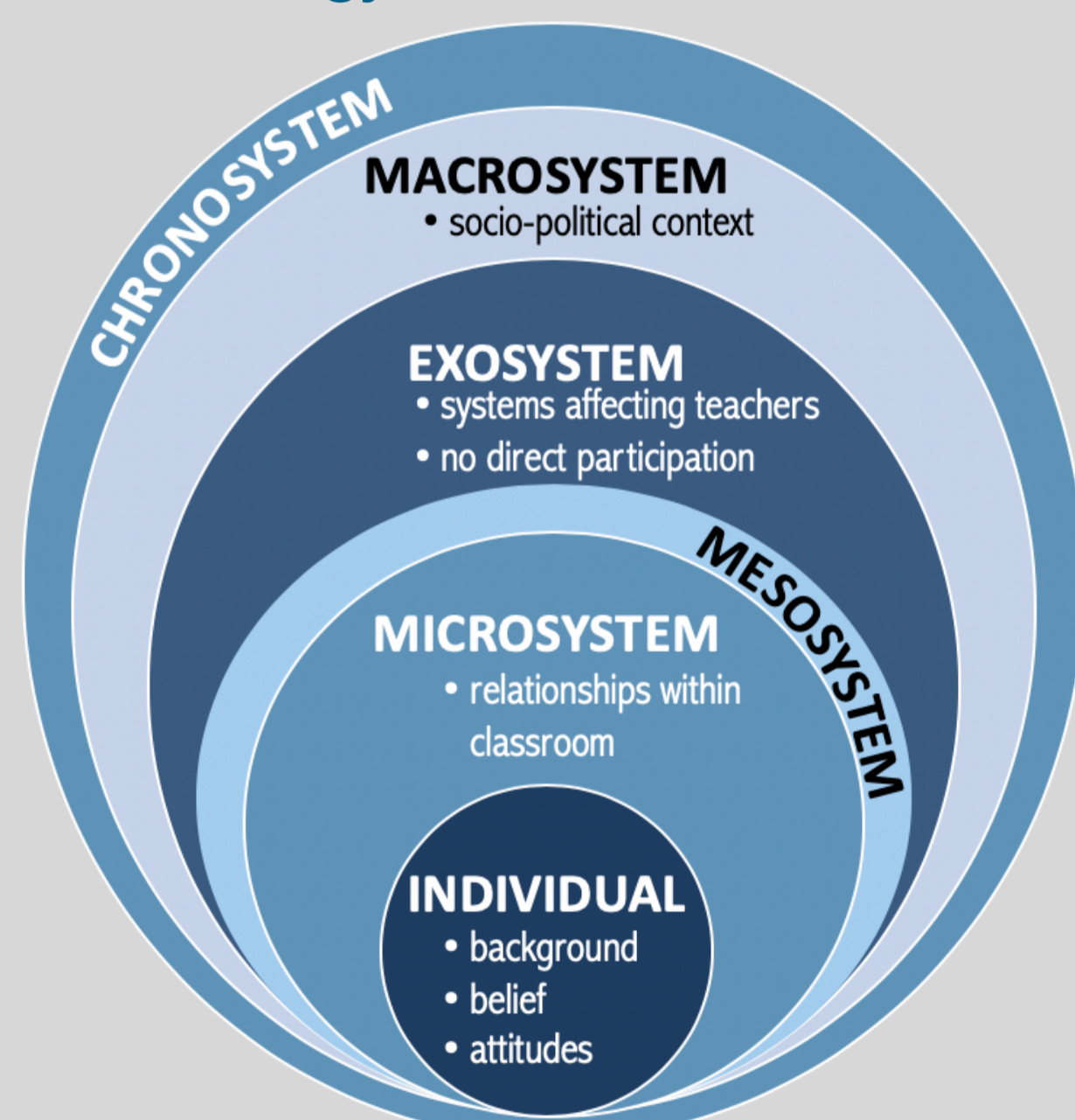
In critical ecology framework, educator-as-learner is central with a focus on professional practice within nested systems.

Reflectivity, self-efficacy, and intentionality emerged as key elements in response to PD experience.

These elements underpin the concept of teacher agency, a predictor of practice change.²

Educator's expressed willingness to act and professional practice changes being implemented as a result of participation.

Critical Ecology Theoretical Framework³



References

1. Paris, C., & Lung, P. (2008). Agency and child-centered practices in novice teachers: Autonomy, efficacy, intentionality, and reflectivity. *Journal of Early Childhood Teacher Education*, 29(3), 253-268.
2. Loth, K., Shanafelt, A., Davey, C., Anfinson, A., Zauner, M., Looby, A. A., ... & Nanney, M. S. (2018). Provider Adherence to Nutrition and Physical Activity Best Practices Within Early Care and Education Settings in Minnesota, Helping to Reduce Early Childhood Health Disparities. *Health Education & Behavior*, 1090198118780458.
3. Baker, M. (2018). Early childhood teachers at the center: A qualitative case study of professional development in an urban district. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 46(2), 231-240.

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