

Theories of Development

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Overview of Theories-Categories

- **Linear Theories**-Ones that try to identify specific universal sources of developmental change from which direct predictions can be made.
 - Linear: Empirical
 - Linear: Rationalist
- **Nonlinear Theories**-Ones that focus on systems change, cultural consciousness, diversity of family structures, and an emphasis on child competence rather than incompetence.
 - Socio-historical
 - Systems

Bergen, D. (2008). *Human Development: Traditional and contemporary theories*. New Jersey: Pearson-Prentice Hall.

- **Linear: Empiricist**
 - Behavioral genetic researchers and information processing theorists.
 - Sees knowledge as being a repertoire of patterns that individuals learn and operate upon and learning is cumulative.
 - Development is additive; there are no global stages or qualitative changes, just quantitative change, which may lead to functional change.
 - Sometimes called a “reductionist” theoretical view; that is, seeing all the parts enables understanding the whole.
 - Individuals seen as passive receptors of experiences or limited by genetic qualities with development occurring because environmental stimuli act upon them.
 - These theorists use experimental or quasi-experimental designs or correlation methods that attempt to find relationships among variables.
 - Include behaviorists, learning theorists (Watson, Thorndike); behavioral geneticists (Plomin and Scarr); information processing/cognitive science theorists (Siegler and Kail).

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- **Linear: Rationalist**
 - Theories categorized as holistic, having a “growth” perspective, drawn from biological and botanical models. Hold that human development is more than just its parts and newer forms emerge from old forms (epigenetic).
 - Focus on qualitative changes in structures and resulting functional changes. Observe both continuities and discontinuities of development; and note states or levels that are qualitatively different from those of earlier developmental periods.
 - Assumes that growth to higher level forms of development will occur. Individuals are seen as active in their own developmental progress rather than being passive receptors.
 - Knowledge seen as created by the human mind and learning takes place when cognitive structures are applied to experiences. It is not just a cumulative process but a transformational process.
 - Stage theorists and cognitive scientists most prominently portray this perspective.

--Theorists in this school, use clinical observation, interviews, and natural observational techniques.

--Includes stage theorists, such as Freud, Erikson, Piaget, social-emotional theorists (Greenspan); metacognition and theory of mind (Flavell); and sociomoral development issues (Damon).

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- **Nonlinear: Socio-historical**

--Focus is on environmental influences that may differentiate developmental patterns, and emphasize culturally diverse rather than universal patterns of development.

--These theorists think the best way to study development is from within the culture of the individuals, their explanations are “situated” within contexts and thus, cannot be universally applied.

--See development as more open-ended, with no rigid direction, pattern or limit.

--Knowledge is a creation of a social group and learning is a process of being initiated into the group; development is a process of social initiation.

--Soviet, life-span and ecological theorists take this view.

--Methods used to study development involve the total context and its interaction with the individuals of that culture.

--Includes such theorists as Vygotsky, those studying “situated” development (Rogoff); and, Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological theory; Neugarten and Schaie.

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- **Nonlinear: Dynamical Systems**

--Drawn primarily from neuroscience and physics.

--Draws on recent brain research that examines how various structures and functions of the brain develop and are related to perceptual, cognitive, and social-emotional development.

--Theorists incorporate concepts of complexity, plasticity, self-organization, and recursive nested features at all levels.

--Can be characterized as proto-theory rather than fully developed theory.

--These theorists believe that chaotic complex systems such as human beings, have the ability to self-organize into purposeful behaviors and believe that sensitive dependence on initial conditions, in which a small input in a system may yield disparate results, can explain developmental change.

--Research methodology involves collecting minute process data (microgenesis) and using computers to map the developmental change process.

--Examples include non-Piagetian theorists; such as Kurt Fischer; Vandervan, & Waldrop.

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- **Guidelines for Encouraging Initiative in the Preschool Child**

--Encourage children to make and to act on choices.

--Make sure that each child has a chance to experience success.

--Encourage make-believe with a wide variety of roles.

--Be tolerant of accidents and mistakes, especially when children are attempting to do something on their own.

- **Guidelines for Encouraging Industry**

- Make sure that students have opportunities to set and work toward realistic goals.
- Give students a chance to show their independence and responsibility.
- Provide support to students who seem discouraged.

- **Guidelines for Supporting Identity Formation**

- Give students many models for career choices and other adult roles.
- Help students find resources for working out personal problems.
- Be tolerant of teenage fads as long as they don't offend others or interfere with learning.
- Give students realistic feedback about themselves.

Cognitive Development

- **Piaget's Stages of Cognitive Development**

- Sensorimotor** (0-2yrs) – *Begins to use imitation, memory, and thought: Begins to recognize object permanence. Moves from reflex actions to goal directed activity.*
- Preoperational** (2-7yrs) – *Develops language and the ability to think symbolically. Uses one-way logic. Thinks egocentrically.*
- Concrete Operational** (7-11yrs) – *Solves concrete problems in logical fashion. Understands laws conservation and uses classification seriation. Understands reversibility.*
- Formal Operational** (11-Adult) – *Thinking becomes more scientific. Able to solve abstract problems through systematic experimentation. Develops concerns about social issues, identity.*

Source: Wadsworth, B.J. (1989). Piaget's theory of cognitive development: An introduction for students of psychology and education. New York: Longman.

- **Implications of Piaget's Work**

- If we understand children's thinking, we will be better able to match teaching methods to children's abilities.
- Children will vary greatly in their level of cognitive development and in their academic knowledge.
- Children and other students must not be bored by work that is too simple nor left behind by teaching they cannot understand.
- We must see that every person is actively engaged in the learning process. Students must be able to incorporate the information presented into their own schemas.
- Schooling must give students a chance to experience the world. This should not be limited to physical manipulation of objects but also include mental manipulation of ideas that arise from class projects or experiments.
- Teachers and parents should constantly ask students to apply recently learned principles in a number of different situations.
- Students need interaction to test their thinking to be challenged, to receive feedback and to watch how others solve or work out problems.
- A general rule: Students should act, manipulate, observe and then talk and/or write about what they have experienced.

- **Lev Vygotsky's Theory of Cognitive Development and Culture**

- The child's culture shapes cognitive development by determining what and how the child will learn about the world.
- Cognitive development depends greatly on the people in the child's world.
- Children's knowledge, ideas, attitudes, and values develop through interactions with others.
- Language plays an important role. It provides a means for expressing ideas and asking questions. Provides categories and concepts for thinking.

- **Guidelines for Teaching the Preoperational Child**

- Use Concrete props and visual aids whenever possible.
- Make instructions relatively short, using actions as well as words.
- Don't expect the students to be consistent in their ability to see the world from someone else's point of view.
- Be sensitive to the possibility that students may have different meanings for the same word or different words for the same meaning. Students may also expect everyone to understand words they have invented.
- Give children a great deal of hands-on practice with the skills that serve as building blocks for more complex skills like reading comprehension.
- Provide a wide range of experiences in order to build a foundation for concept learning and language.

- **Guidelines for Teaching the Concrete Operational Child**

- Continue to use concrete props and visual aids, especially when dealing with sophisticated material.
- Continue to give students a chance to manipulate and test objects.
- Make sure presentations and readings are brief and well organized.
- Use familiar examples to explain more complex ideas.
- Give opportunities to classify and group objects and ideas on increasingly complex levels.
- Present problems that require logical, analytical thinking.

- **Guidelines for Helping Students to Use Formal Operations**

- Continue to use concrete-operational teaching strategies and materials.
- Give students the opportunity to explore many hypothetical questions.
- Give students opportunities to solve problems and reason scientifically.
- Whenever possible, teach broad concepts, not just facts, using materials and ideas relevant to the students' lives.

- **Lev Vygotsky's Theory of Cognitive Development and Culture**

- Private speech is important – even mutterings. It guides their behavior and thinking.
- Children tend to use more private speech when they are confused, having difficulties, or making mistakes.
- Cognitive development occurs through the interaction of the child with more capable members of the culture – adults or more able peers. They serve as guides, teachers and provide information and support necessary for intellectual growth.

- **Lev Vygotsky's Theory of Cognitive Development and Culture**

--**Zone of Proximal Development** – is the area where the child can not solve a problem alone, but can with adult guidance or advanced peers.

--**Social Interaction** - is the origin of higher mental processes such as problem solving.

- **Implications For Teachers and Parents from Vygotsky's Theory**

--It makes sense to allow and even encourage students to use private speech in school.

--Insisting on total silence when students are working on difficult problems may make the work even harder for them.

--Increased muttering could be a sign that students need help.

--One teaching strategy called **Cognitive Self-Instruction** teaches students to use self-talk to guide learning.

- **Guidelines for Applying Vygotsky's Ideas in Teaching**

--**Tailor scaffolding to the needs of students.**

--**Make sure students have access to powerful tools that support thinking.**

--**Capitalize on dialogue and group learning.**

(Scaffolding – temporary support given a child who is mastering a task.)

Woolfolk (1998).

- **Fischer's Skill Theory--Kurt. W. Fischer, Harvard University**

--Central hypothesis: Variations of behavior are constrained by an upper limit on the complexity of skills, called the optimal level.

--Based on collaborative or interactional view – that child and environment always work together to produce behavior.

--Only under optimal performance conditions are the levels evident in children.

--Conditions for the child must be ideal: clear instructions, familiar content, activities valued by the child's culture, high motivation, good health, tasks that do not overburden the child's memory.

--Fischer's research indicates that most behavior involves variations in performance below the optimal level. Students rarely perform at their optimal levels under assessment conditions used by schools.

--Without environmental support for high-level performance, behavior typically falls to a level far below the optimal.

Moral Development Theories

- **Character Education--Thomas Lickona--The New Character Education**

--The Character Education Partnership was launched in March 1993, as a national coalition committed to putting character development at the top of the nation's educational agenda.

Members include representatives from business, labor, government, youth, parents, faith communities, and the media.

--Three Causes:

--The decline of the family.

(Families no longer a child's primary moral teacher and the disruption of families has made a significant impact on schools.)

--Troubling trends in youth character.

(poor parenting, fractured families, wrong adult role models, sex, violence, materialism and impact of mass media, peer pressure, rising youth violence, increasing dishonesty – lying, cheating, staling; growing disrespect for authority, peer cruelty, a resurgence of bigotry on school campuses – from preschool through higher education; a decline in the work ethic, sexual precocity, growing self-centeredness and declining civic responsibility; an increase in self-destructive behavior, and ethical illiteracy.

--A recovery of shared, objectively important ethical values.

(A recovery of the wisdom that we do share a basic morality, essential for our survival; that adults must promote this morality by teaching the young, directly and indirectly, such values as respect, responsibility, trustworthiness, fairness, caring, and civic virtue; and that these values are not merely subjective preferences but have objective worth and a claim on our collective conscience.)

--What Character Education Must Do

--Must have an adequate theory of what good character is, one which gives schools a clear idea of their goals.

--Must be broadly conceived to encompass the Schools must help children understand the core values, cognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects of morality.

--Good character consists of knowing the good, desiring the good, and doing the good.

--Schools must help children understand the core values, adopt or commit to them, and then act upon them in their own lives.

--What Character Education Must Do-Developmental Domains

Cognitive: Awareness of the moral dimensions of the situation at hand, knowing moral values and what they require of us in concrete cases, perspective-taking, moral reasoning, thoughtful decision-making, and moral self-knowledge.

Emotional: Conscience (the felt obligation to do what one judges to be right), self-respect, empathy, loving the good, self-control, and humility (a willingness to both recognize and correct our moral feelings).

Moral Action: Competence (skills such as listening, communicating, and cooperating), will (which mobilizes our judgment and energy, and moral habit (a reliable inner disposition to respond to situations in a morally good way).

--Developing Character

--This approach tells schools to look at themselves through a moral lens and consider how virtually everything that goes on their affects on the values and character of students. Then plan how to use all phases of classroom an school life as deliberate tools of character development.

--The individual teacher should:

- Act as a caregiver, model and mentor. (Love, respect, setting good examples, etc.)
- Create a moral community. (Know and respect one another, valued membership and responsibility).
- Practice Moral Discipline.(Creation and enforcement of rules, etc.)

--Developing Character

- Create a democratic classroom environment. (Involve students in decision-making and responsibility).
- Teach Values through the Curriculum.
- Use Cooperative Learning. (To help students appreciate others, develop perspectives and learn how to work with others toward common goals).

--Developing Character

- Develop a “conscience of craft.” (Foster students’ appreciation of learning, capacity for hard work, commitment to excellence).
- Encourage Moral Reflection. (Through reading, research, essay writing,journal keeping, discussion and debate.)
- Teach conflict resolution. (Students learn how to solve conflicts “fairly”and without force and conflicts).

--Developing Character

- Foster Caring Beyond the Classroom (Use positive role models to inspire altruistic behavior; provide opportunities at every grade level to perform school and community.
- Create a Positive Moral Culture in the School. (Through leadership, discipline, school wide sense of community, meaningful student government, making time for moral concerns that supports and amplifies the values taught in classrooms.)

--Developing Character

- Recruit Parents and the Community as Partners in Character Education. (Give parents specific ways they can reinforce the school’s values, seek the help of the community, churches, businesses, local government, and the media in promoting the core values.)
- According to Lickona, educating for character is a moral imperative if we care about the future of our society and out children.

(Source: Lickona, Thomas. “The Return of Character Education.” Educational Leadership, Vol 51(3), November 1993, 6-11.

- **Kohlberg’s Theory of Moral Development**

Levels

Level 1: Preconventional (4-10yrs). Standards are those of others -> to avoid punishment or reap rewards.

Stages of Reasoning

Stage 1: Orientation toward punishment and obedience. Children obey rules to avoid punishment.

Stage 2: Instrumental purpose and exchange. Conform to rules out of self-interest and consideration for what others can do for them in return. “You scratch my back, I’ll scratch yours.”

- **Kohlberg’s Theory of Moral Development**

- Levels**

- Level 2:** Conventional Role Conformity (10-13yrs). Want to please others. Still observe standards of others and have internalized or absorbed standards.

- Stages of Reasoning**

- Stage 3:** Maintaining Mutual Relationships. Approval of others, the golden rule. Want to please and help others. Develop own ideas of what a good person is.

- Stage 4:** Develops social system and conscience. Consider another wrong if it violates a rule that involves others.

- **Kohlberg’s Theory of Moral Development**

- Levels**

- Level 3:** Post Conventional Morality of Autonomous Moral Principles (13 yrs -). Marks attainment of true morality. May encounter conflicts between 2 socially accepted standards.

- Stages of Reasoning**

- Stage 5:** Morality of Rights & Contracts. People think in rational terms, valuing will of majority & welfare of society.

- Stage 6:** Universal Ethical Principles. People do what they individually think is right. Act in accordance with internal standards.

- **Implications of Kohlberg’s Theory**

- Internalization**

- In time, children internalize the moral rules and principles of the authority figures who have guided them; that is, children adopt the external standards as their own.

- Note:** If children are given reasons when they are corrected or instructed about their actions, they are more likely to internalize (and understand) moral principles.

- Modeling**

- Children who have consistently been exposed to caring generous adult models will tend to be more concerned for the rights and feelings of others.

- **Adult Development Theories (See Screen)**