



PROJECT FOR INCLUSIVE EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE & EDUCATION

Illustrative Pack for ECCE Diploma Constructions of Childhood and Children



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Authors:

Lorayne Excell
Colwyn Martin

Illustrations:

Rob Owen

Language editor:

Paula Krynauw

Learning Design:

Sheila Drew, Saide

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Introduction

This illustrative pack on constructions of childhood is intended to enhance your own understanding of constructions of childhood. It also gives you ideas and ways of introducing the concepts to your students.

A construct:
a certain way of thinking about an idea.

Access

It is often difficult to make theory accessible to students in ways that are meaningful to them and to their practice. The key is to find ways of getting students to engage with the references and readings by getting them to write down, summarise and do something with what they read.

Remember students studying the ECCE diploma programme do not necessarily have a background of academic study but they will have a lot of practical experience and many of them will have their own theories about what they do and why they do it. Draw on that experience, help them to think critically about what they read and then give them opportunities to reflect on, and build on, their own practice using theory as a framework.

Reading support

As expected, there is a lot of reading in this pack for student teachers. Of course, you will want to do this reading yourself, but throughout this Illustrative Pack we have also suggested additional readings. It is expected that teacher educators know more than students are expected to know, these additional readings are intended mostly for you. There are also points in the pack where we suggest you do some additional reading in order to be able to unpack it for students. Many of the articles and readings are only accessible online and may have copyright restrictions. If students cannot access them you will have to:

- Summarise the readings for your students so they can access the information; **or**
- Request permission through your institution for the relevant readings to be posted on your Learning Management System (LMS) or printed in your study guides; **or**
- Provide other suitable reading.

Activity format

For the activities, we have used a table format that is well suited for uploading into an online LMS, such as *Moodle* or *Blackboard*. For each activity there is a clear indication of:

- The purpose of the activity;
- Links to resources students will need, such as readings;
- The task that you want students to do;
- An approximate time that the activity will take to complete;
- A response, such as what students share with each other for peer learning;
- Feedback from peers and more knowledgeable individuals; and
- A guided reflection on the activity.

These activity components are important in all learning, whether online or paper-based or self-study or face to face.

The activities in this Illustrative Pack can easily be adapted for face-to-face learning. For example, where students in an online environment contribute to an online chat forum, in face-to-face learning they will discuss in groups.

Here is an annotated version of the activity format. Think about each component of the activity template, why it is important, and how it will apply in your context:

| Activity number: Topic | |
|--|---|
| Purpose | |
| Resources | <i>This describes what students will need. Designer to create hyperlinks to videos, documents, wiki's etc.</i> |
| Task [xx minutes] | <i>This gives clear instructions to students on what to do.</i> 1. |
| Response | <i>This guides students on how to respond to the task, and share what they have done with their peers. For example, link students to a journal or a chat forum, or use other social media platforms.</i> |
| Feedback | <i>This describes how students will give feedback, and receive feedback from peers, knowledgeable others, etc. For example:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Read and respond to at least two responses/postings from other participants.</i> • <i>Read the Guided reflection on the activity.</i> |
| Guided reflection on the activity | <i>This is a comment on the activity. It is often separate from the activity in text form, sometimes in a 'hidden' comment feature.</i> |

Overview

In this illustrative pack, we explore different constructs of childhood and children. This pack comprises three themes:

- Theme 1 explores the historical evolution of childhood and children.
- Theme 2 examines contemporary understandings of childhood and children from different perspectives, namely the being, belonging and becoming child.
- Theme 3 looks at the Western construction of the developmental child. Ideas for practice are also considered.

Theme 1: Historical Evolution of Childhood and Children

In this theme we consider the following:

- The importance of understanding childhood and children as a social construct in the 21st century;
- The changing ideas of what constitutes childhood and children;
- Different perceptions of childhood and children over the centuries and how these perceptions have shaped different constructions of childhood and children; and
- Three modern-day understandings of childhood and children.

Introduction

We all have an experience of childhood. We ourselves have been children. We have had experiences of having children and/or working and interacting with children on a social basis. However, we have all had very different experiences. Our cultural traditions and value systems are influenced by our childhood memories and experiences.

You might ask yourself, *Why do I need to know about constructions of childhood as an ECCE teacher?* You may have a lot of teaching experience and have your own ideas about children and childhood. Let us explore what those ideas are and where they come from.

| Activity 1.1: Children and childhood | |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| Purpose | Think about your own ideas of children and childhood. |
| Resources | None. |
| Task [30 minutes] | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Think about, and write down, your own ideas and concepts of <i>child</i> and <i>childhood</i>. 2. Complete these sentences for yourself: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. A child is ... b. Childhood is ... |
| Response | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post your ideas in the chat forum called <i>Evolution of childhood?</i> |
| Feedback | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read at least three other posts and comment on them. • Read other students' responses to your post. • Read the <i>Guided reflection on the activity</i>. |

Guided reflection on the activity

Did you consider any of the following statements? A child is:

- A small human being who is still growing;
- Someone who is still learning;

- Still growing and developing;
- Someone who needs guidance from a more knowledgeable other;
- Someone who develops holistically;
- Someone who needs care and nurturing; and
- Someone who is vulnerable.

These understandings of a child are important and accurate. They imply that the child is still growing and refer to the future adult or the adult-in-the-making. However the view of children as adults-in-the-making has resulted in a simplistic idea of the universal child – all children grow and develop at the same rate regardless of culture, learning opportunities and environmental contexts. In this understanding all children have similar childhoods and ‘one size fits all’ (MacNaughton, 2005). We will revisit these ideas in more detail later on in this module.

Contemporary thinking suggests that though knowledge and models of child development are necessary, they are not in themselves sufficient to understand the complexities of children’s lives (Walsh, 2005). You also need to look at the social, cultural, political and economic influences on children and their lives.

Stop and think

Perhaps you thought of some other alternatives about children and childhood. Study the word cloud in Figure 1. Compare what you think of the ideas mentioned above with other ideas, such as those in the word cloud.

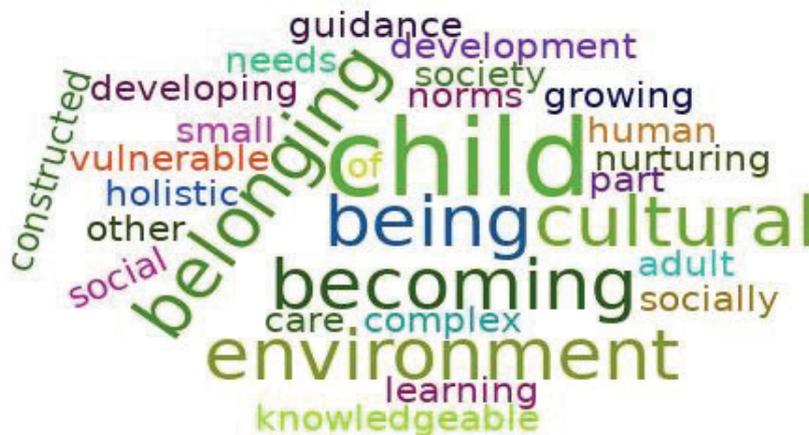


Figure 1 Other ways of thinking about children and childhood

The construct of *child* and *childhood* is complex and challenging. Childhood can be defined as ‘the state or period of being a child’ (Dictionary.com, 2019). We think childhood is more than that. It should also consider the conditions of a child’s life and the qualities of the childhood years. This includes cultural norms and expectations, which are vitally important aspects of social life (Wagg, 1992: 10 cited in McDowal Clark). Childhood is, therefore, what members of a particular society, at a particular time and in a particular place, say it is. In other words, childhood is a socially constructed idea (Wagg, 1992, cited in McDowal Clark; James, Jenks and Prout, 2017; Wyness, 2012; McDowal Clark, 2016).

Historical evolution of concepts of children and childhood

This theme explores the historical shifts in understandings of childhood and children. It illustrates how these shifts have influenced early childhood care, education and practice. In addition, it exposes how childhood and children have been marginalised through the ages and how those who care for and work with children have been similarly side-lined and marginalised. It should be noted that this chapter cases the study of childhood from Euro Western Perspectives. This perspective remains dominant and unavoidable given the lack of literature from the majority world on early childhood development.

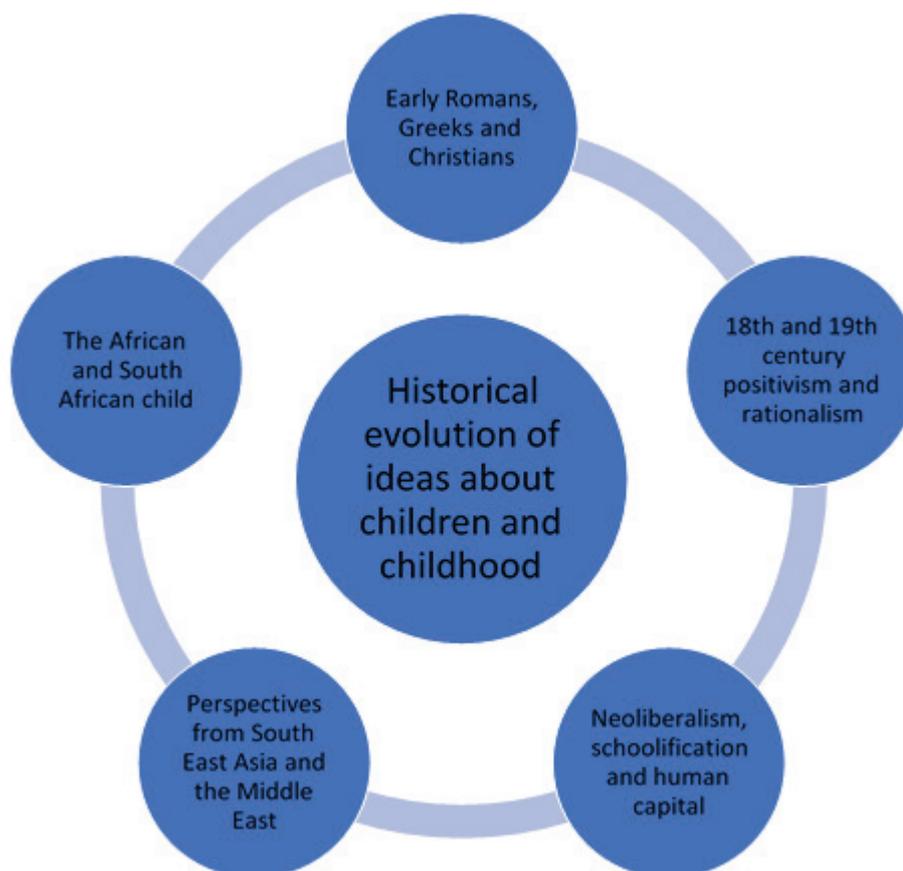


Figure 1 Conceptual map of the historical evolution of concepts of children and childhood

All cultures have had their own specific influences on their understandings of children and childhood. We will begin with the Early Greeks, Romans and Christians. Many of their ideas continue to influence modern day thinking about childhood, children and early learning in the Western world, including in contemporary South Africa.

The following paragraphs will give you some idea about how the early Greeks, Romans and Christians thought about childhood and children. Read the paragraphs and then do Activity 1.2. You might also find the Khan Academy video at this link below interesting: <https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/world-history/ancient-medieval/classical-greece/v/socrates-plato-aristotle>.

Notes for Teacher Educators

The Khan Academy video is optional viewing for student teachers, but it is strongly advised that teacher educators view this video. Of course if you can give students access to wifi, for example during a face to face session, you can give students the chance to view the video too.

Early Greeks and Greek childhood

The early Greek view of infants and young children varied from state to state. Infanticide (the killing of children) was a universal practice, particularly in regard to girls and infants with birth defects. An unwanted infant might be *potted*, that is, put in a pot or basket and left at a temple gate in the hope that someone who needed a servant might adopt it.

Poor children in ancient Greece did not go to school. They worked in their homes to help the family make a living. Middle-class children in ancient Greece began education at around six or seven and went to school for three or four years. Most boys then had to join the army. After military training, some boys from wealthy families studied further under a wisdom seller or sophist.

Early Romans and Roman childhood

The Romans conquered the Greeks in 146 BC and many educated Greeks found themselves in the role of the teacher-slave to the elite Roman families.

At the height of the Roman Empire, formal schools were established and fathers were expected to have their children educated to some extent. They had to pay for this formal education which was restricted to the basic necessities of life – fighting, farming, swimming and riding. A Roman student would progress through three tiers of schooling – primary, secondary and college.

Early Christians and pre-industrial childhood

As the Roman Empire was crumbling, the Christian church rose to power. This worked in favour of young children since the newborn was considered the owner of a soul. The Christian emperor Constantine made killing a child a crime in 318 AD.

By the middle of the 5th century (around 460 AD), the Roman Empire had officially collapsed.

The pre-industrial era was a difficult time for children as many were still abandoned, neglected and abused. Over the next five centuries, fewer children received an education. Only those who planned to enter religious life and those belonging to wealthy families had access to some form of education. Girls were occasionally educated in convents. Children were abandoned to wet nurses, monasteries, convents and foster families. Infanticide was still prevalent, although it was mostly hidden.

In the fifteen hundreds, with the rise of the Puritan Movement the concept of *original sin* came to the fore and children came to be seen as inherently evil. This resulted in the condoning of punishment and biblical teachings were seen as a way to counter children's natural wickedness. This view of the child as inherently evil can still be seen in some societies today. Possibly, this is one of the reasons why corporal punishment is still seen today as an effective way of disciplining young children.

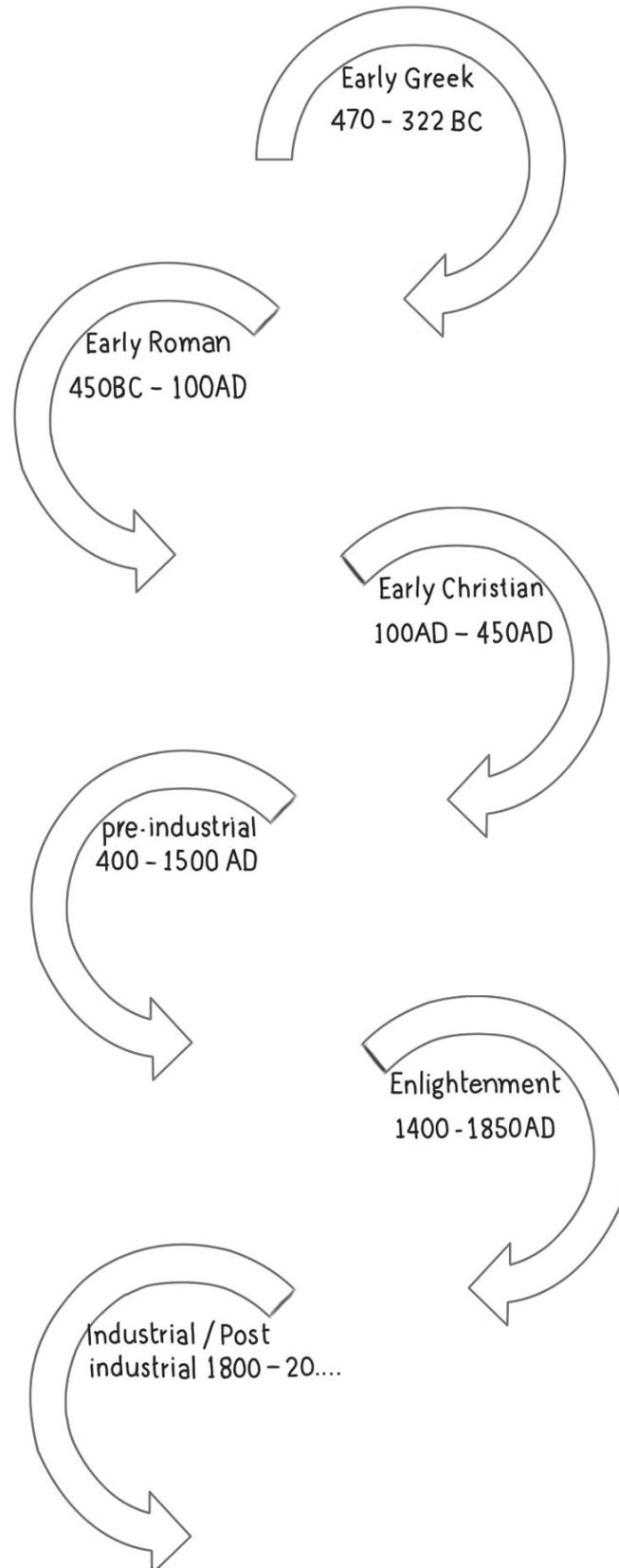
Around this time another important construction about childhood was taking hold. As soon as children were no longer dependent on the mother or caregiver, they were expected to join in adult life – both for work and play. Children were not treated any differently to adults. There was no recognition that they needed any particular care and education because of their young age.

According to Phillippe Ariès (1963), there was no concept of childhood in medieval times. He argued that the concept of childhood is a modern phenomenon. This theory has been refuted and is considered controversial because it is claimed that his research lacks credibility (Cunningham, 2006). However, Ariès work has highlighted the significance of children in society.

Do activity 1.2 to help you to think about what you have read about early Greek, Roman and Christian childhoods.

| Activity 1.2: Concepts of childhood timeline | |
|---|---|
| Purpose | Create your own childhood timeline. |
| Resources | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large piece of paper and pens. |
| Task [45 minutes, and ongoing] | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. On a large piece of paper, draw a timeline that looks something like the one on the next page. 2. Read the notes above on Greek, Roman, Christian and pre-industrial childhood. While you read add key words next to the appropriate spaces on your timeline. 3. What elements of these Greek philosophers' ideas about childhood and children are still valid in contemporary times? 4. Do you think that children are naturally evil, born evil or naturally wicked? Why do you think so? |
| Response | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share your responses to Question 3 and Question 4 in the <i>Evolution of childhood</i> chat forum. |
| Feedback | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read at least three other posts and comment on them. • Read other students' responses to your post. • Read the <i>Guided reflection on the activity</i>. |

Historical timeline



Guided reflection on the activity

Many important ideas about childhood have been carried through over hundreds of years. For example:

- Infanticide was fairly common, even though Constantine outlawed it;
- There was no education from birth to four years;
- Some middle class and wealthy children went to school for a short time;
- Poor children did not go to school but worked in the family;
- Boys did military training;
- There was a rise and then a decline in formal schooling and the church came to be the main place for education;
- The idea of original sin led to children being seen as inherently evil; and
- Children were groomed to be *adult* at a young age.

The Enlightenment and childhood

Towards the end of the Middle Ages, in 1450, the printing press was invented. Books could now be printed instead of written by hand. Therefore, many more books were produced and many more people had access to knowledge. This supported an intellectual movement known as the Enlightenment or the Age of Reason and it spread across Europe during the 18th century. It was inspired by the work of John Locke (1632–1704) and Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778) amongst others. Both Locke and Rousseau were influential in shaping modern day thinking about childhood and children.

These new movements contributed to the Industrial Revolution with mass production occurring in large factories. The Industrial Revolution changed people’s ways of living and tranquil rural lifestyles became a thing of the past.

Family structures and family life changed as adults moved from rural to urban areas to work in the factories. Children, who had previously worked alongside their parents in the family unit, were now often left on their own as parents worked long hours in factories. There was a corresponding growth in the middle classes because of the availability of books and knowledge. These middle class parents placed an emphasis on early childhood care and nurturing.

Industrialisation had one of the greatest impacts on the lives of children and these influences are still present in many sectors today.

| Activity 1.3: Your timeline continued | |
|--|---|
| Purpose | Add to your childhood timeline. |
| Resources | Large piece of paper and pens. |
| Task [40 minutes, and ongoing] | 1. Read the notes above on the Enlightenment and childhood. While you read, write down in the appropriate space on your timeline some of the consequences of the Industrial Revolution on the |

| | |
|-----------------|---|
| | <p>lives of children from different social classes.</p> <p>2. From your own cultural perspective, which aspects of childhood from the Industrial Revolution period still exist today – in rural and/or urban areas?</p> |
| Response | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Share your responses to Question 2 in the <i>Evolution of childhood</i> chat forum. |
| Feedback | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read at least three other posts, and comment on them. Read other students' responses to your post. Read the <i>Guided reflection on the activity</i>. |

Guided reflection on the activity

John Locke (1632–1704) and Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778) are now on your timeline. You can see a change in childhood with children being left more on their own, with their parents working in factories rather than children working with the family.

The Industrial Revolution led to many hardships for children and their families and saw an increase in poverty. Many children were abandoned or neglected as their parents worked for long hours in factories or in the mines. The plight of children led to various social reform movements. In England, for example, the government intervened and passed many regulations in an attempt to regulate the well-being of children. One important regulation was the introduction of compulsory schooling in the mid-1880s. At the same time, improved medicine and public health measures led to a drop in child mortality (death) rates and a greater interest in studying children and children's minds. By the end of the 19th century, a child-study movement had begun to develop, intent on studying children scientifically (McDowall Clark, 2016).

The influence of positivism and rationalism

The Renaissance and Industrial Revolution led to two new philosophical movements known as positivism and rationalism. These movements' understandings of children and childhood have currently become the dominant, widely accepted view of child development.

The child-study movement was informed by positivism and rationalism and provided objective, scientific facts about children's development and learning. Gradually the emphasis was placed on what children *could not do*

and resulted in a *deficit* understanding of child development. The deficit was said to arise from development problems occurring within the child.

Positivism and rationalism were two philosophical movements which dominated Western thinking during the 19th and 20th centuries.

Through this scientific approach, testing, observation and experimentation were used to explain universal laws of development. Development theory, as it became known, further emphasised that children's thinking differed from that of adults. This theory led to specific understandings of children and childhood that became very influential in the 19th and 20th centuries. These movements reinforced rigid understandings of child development and learning, based on predetermined development milestones.

The development focus concentrated on what children could not do, rather than recognising their strengths. This has resulted in what we today recognise as a deficit understanding of children – we try to correct what they cannot do/know rather than building on what they do know and can do. With this understanding, children are expected to follow universal laws of development where all children should be doing and knowing similar things at more or less the same time. This fixed understanding of child development and learning is what the new constructions of children are challenging (see Theme 2).

Neoliberalism, schoolification and human capital

One of the consequences of the Industrial Revolution and compulsory schooling was the gradual realisation of the importance of early childhood education. Neoliberalism is the idea that citizens could and should become economically independent. This has resulted in increasing the length of time given to compulsory schooling, especially in the Western World. By the mid-1900s, governments had begun to increasingly invest in the education of the young child. This investment came with greater controls and policy guidelines.

Neoliberalism is a theory of governance framed in economic terms and is characterised by free market trade and a shift away from state welfare provision.

| Activity 1.4: Positivism, rationalism and neoliberalism | |
|---|--|
| Purpose | Add positivism, rationalism and neoliberalism to your timeline. |
| Resources | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Your timeline and pens. |
| Task [50 minutes] | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Read the section on positivism and rationalism above. On your timeline, under industrial/post-industrial, write down some key developments in how people began to view childhood and children. Read the section on neoliberalism, schoolification and human capital above. Complete your timeline by adding in key points about neoliberalism, schoolification and human capital. Ovortrup (1994) has argued that school children are not, in fact, removed from the labour market but are engaged in economically productive work. Find one example in the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) (DBE, 2015), of skills that link to the world of work. |
| Response | In the <i>Evolution of childhood?</i> chat forum: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Share two key developments in positivism, |

| | |
|-----------------|--|
| | <p>rationalism and neoliberalism on the views of childhood.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comment on how the skills you have identified in the NCF link to the world of work and the construction of the neoliberal child. |
| Feedback | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read at least three other posts and comment on them. • Read other students' responses to your post. |

Guided reflection on the activity

Today there are development milestones for all development domains (physical, cognitive, social and emotional). These are reflected in the South African National Curriculum Framework as Developmental Guidelines, such as talking in complete sentences, developing large and small muscles, exploring objects using their senses, solving simple problems, developing curiosity, experimenting with different tools, and so on.

The idea of compulsory schooling to create independent citizens has gradually also been adopted by South Africa. For example, there is a movement to make Grade R compulsory and to introduce a second preschool year (National Planning Commission, 2013). Within the South African context, the National Early Learning Development Standards (NELDS) measure children's competencies against desired results, framing the early learning process as an economic enterprise (Martin, 2015). The intention is to produce learners who succeed in school so that they become earners who succeed in life (Brown, 2015; Ball and Vincent, 2005).

The National Curriculum Framework was designed to enable children to develop to their full potential to support the social and economic development of the country as a whole (Department of Basic Education, 2015: 9). Whilst understanding the importance of early childhood education and viewing the importance of government investment in early childhood education, the focus seems to be on seeing children as potentially productive individuals whose productivity is important for the future society (Ang, 2015: 188).

Brown (2015: 236) argues that this has led to learning environments that focus solely on 'teaching academic skills, which in turn limit teachers' practice and results in a marginalisation of children's individual, cultural and linguistic needs.'

Additional reading:

Alcock, S. & Haggerty, M. 2013. Recent policy developments and the "schoolification" of early childhood care and education in Aotearoa, New Zealand. *Early Childhood Folio*, 17(2): 21–26.

Ariès, P. 1963. *Centuries of childhood: a social history of family life*. London: Penguin Books.

Brown, C.P. 2015. Conforming to reform: teaching pre-kindergarten in a neoliberal early education system. *Journal of Early Childhood Research*, 13(3): 236–251.

- Sims, M. et al. 2018. Infant and toddler care: a challenge to neoliberalism. *South African Journal of Childhood Education*, 8(1).
- Moss, P. 2012. Readiness, partnership, a meeting place? Some thoughts on the possible relationship between early childhood and compulsory school education. *Forum*, 54(3): 355–368.
- Qvortrup, J. 1994. *Childhood matters: an introduction*. In *Childhood Matters: Social Theory, Practice and Politics*. The Hague: Bernard van Leer Foundation.

Disciplines such as anthropology and sociology, as well as movements such as the human rights and social justice movements, have more recently impacted our understandings of children and childhood. Let's explore how these new perspectives have led to alternative ways of viewing children and childhood. Let's examine how understandings of children and childhood from other cultural perspectives, particularly from an African perspective, have influenced early childhood care and learning.

Constructions of childhood and children: Africa

In most traditional African communities, children are highly valued. Child rearing practices have been informed by indigenous knowledge systems which have been accumulated over centuries and form the bases of African traditional lifestyles as well as education.

The traditional system was similar in most African countries and involved intellectual, physical and attitudinal training for children to develop into acceptable adults who could take their place in society (Gwanfogbe, 2011).

In traditional African culture, children, sometimes no older than toddlers, were introduced to traditional practices. It was accepted that by partaking in domestic tasks children not only developed physical skills but also self-esteem and self-efficacy as their endeavours were recognised by family and community members (Nsamenang, 2008). Nsamenang further comments that, 'cognitive abilities, technical skills and local cultural competencies develop in parallel. For example, numeracy is stimulated as children learn to recognise (and count) family cattle by the patterns on their hides ... [and] children who help parents to sell vegetables learn about profit.' The African education experience was strictly set up to prepare the young for society in the African community and not necessarily for life outside the ethnic community (Nsamenang and Lamb, 1994).

Teaching methods included observational and practice learning, storytelling, proverbs and myths based on a strong oral tradition. For example, in Swahili various proverbs reinforce the importance of appropriate socialisation and of early learning. Proverbs such as *mtoto umleavyo ndivyo akuavyo* (the way a child is brought up is the way they grow) and *mti mkande ungali mchanga* (a tree must be straightened while still young) remind adults that the child's character will be a reflection of the socialising process that the child undergoes (Abubakar, 2011). Learning was seen as practical, needs-based and driven by cultural relevance, and it was a lifelong process.

One aspect and challenge of the African traditional educational system was the absence of academic examinations necessary to graduate (Bagum and Aheisibwe,

2011). There was (and still is) no agreed upon systematic curricula for traditional African education. What existed was tacit and unwritten (Nsamenang, 2005). Nevertheless, African traditional education, like any effective system of education, was based on sound philosophical foundations or principles (Higgs, 2008). Early educational writers gave the impression that Africa was filled with an illiterate population (Abubakar, 2011) and failed to acknowledge the fact that Africans had both formal and informal education systems. With colonisation and the introduction of schooling, African cultural practices, philosophies and beliefs were totally disregarded (Higgs, 2008).

Constructions of childhood and children: Middle East

Morrison (2017) notes that relatively little has been written about children and youth in the Middle East. Yet, since 300 BC, when the recorded history in the region began, cultures in the Middle East have created their own social constructs of children. Within a rich mix of religions and cultures that exists in the region, there are many approaches to children and childhood.

Important issues in Middle Eastern constructions of childhood are centred on 'the idea of childhood, the place of the child and the duties of the child' (Fernea, 1995: 3). The child is seen as the generational connection in the family unit – the living person who ties the present to the past and to the future. Adults regard the preparation of children for their tasks in the adult world as an important feature in children's lives.

In Muslim Middle East, the strongest influences in a child's life are those of family and religion (Sajjad, 2017). Child-rearing practices in Arab culture will include teaching children to honour and care for parents, grandparents and other elders.

Early socialisation practices include awareness of specific gender roles, cultural values and division of the child's labour based on gender and age. Girls from the age of four can be expected to share responsibility for a younger sibling. In rural areas, small boys could be responsible for taking care of animals. In urban areas, boys could be asked to run errands or help in a family business (Fernea, 1995: 7). Parents, siblings, grandparents, extended family members and also neighbours participate in rearing and socialising the child but family matters are considered private (Morris, 2017).

Ennaji (2018) notes that while more emphasis is still placed on the education of boys the gender gap in education in the Middle East has been significantly reduced. Currently there are 94 girls for every 100 boys in primary education. In urban areas, children from well-to-do families have access to regular schooling but children from poorer families do not have the same opportunities (Morrison, 2017). In rural areas, the majority of children are taught by their families how to work the land and do traditional crafts. The only formal education these rural children receive, would be from the mosque school (*kuttab*), listening to Qur'an readings in mosques, or through 'informal exchange of information in the family' (Morrison, 2017).

Constructions of childhood and children: India

India is a richly diverse country with many ethnic groups, races, religions, languages and cultures. It is a country with a population of over 1.37 billion people, the majority of whom are children and youth.

It has one of the oldest civilisations in the world and also a long history of education – at least 3 000 years. Historically, relationships between masters and disciples were

central to education in India. Children, both boys and girls, also learned in the home, as trainees in the family business and through peer-to-peer learning (Seth, 2007). Knowledge was passed on orally from one generation to another. After being colonised by Britain in the 1880s Western knowledge was prioritised and indigenous knowledge became marginalised.

Ongoing child labour is both a consequence and cause of poverty (Singh, 1990). Children in India have always been associated with work and, initially, work was seen as a way for children to fulfil their natural and creative abilities and to promote healthy growth and development (Singh, 1990). In medieval times, some crafts were totally dependent on the employment of children. However, with time the system became abusive. At present, India has the biggest population of child labourers in the world despite legislation being in place to prohibit this practice.

Early on in India's history women enjoyed equal status with men in all aspects of life and were regarded as valuable members of society (Mahapatrea, 2018). However, these views changed over time and the position of women, and thus children, deteriorated. It is only in recent times that there have been active campaigns to improve the circumstances of both women and children. Children, especially those from lower income households and rural areas continue to face many challenges.

Gender discrimination is a major challenge in India. Many of the 225 million young girls growing up in India (Chandy and Singh, 2014) have harsh childhoods. According to Kapur (2018), families in India view girls as fundamentally different from boys. Boys are perceived as family assets. If they are provided with an education, they will bring wealth and enhance the reputation of their families. Boys are regarded as more intelligent, capable, talented and responsible than girls and therefore more important in society. Indian families' interest in having boys has led to the common practice of female foeticide and infanticide. In 2015 the Indian Prime Minister launched the *Beti Bachao Beti Padhao* (Save the Daughter, Teach the Daughter) campaign, aimed improving India's child gender ratio. According to Kapur (2018) girls and girl-child education will continue to experience social discrimination as long as gender bias prevails within the Indian society.

| Activity 1.5: African, Middle Eastern, Asian perspectives on childhood | |
|---|--|
| Purpose | Comparing views of childhood. |
| Resources | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Your timeline and pens. |
| Task [30 minutes] | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Read the sections on African, Middle Eastern and Asian perspectives on childhood above. 2. Identify some similarities and differences between these constructions of children and childhood. 3. How do these ideas compare with those on your timeline? 4. Adapt and add to your timeline accordingly. |
| Response | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the <i>Evolution of childhood?</i> chat forum, share two similarities and two differences in African, Middle Eastern and Asian perspectives on childhood and |

| | |
|-----------------|---|
| | those in your timeline. |
| Feedback | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read other posts in the chat forum. • Give feedback to your fellow students. |

Guided reflection on the activity

African ways of knowing and doing were marginalised which Penn (2005) claims is an inevitable outcome of cultural domination. A disregard for African traditional practices and philosophies was very noticeable in early childhood education. New ideas, based on the dominant Western understandings of ‘the right way’ to bring up children, to discipline, to parent and to educate replaced local understandings of child care and education (Penn, 2005).

Currently, the dominant Western perspective of children and childhood is being increasingly challenged in Africa by contemporary shifts in understandings of children. These challenges are being strengthened by the ongoing movement to recognise and reclaim appropriate traditional practices that give both relevance and status to African cultural practices and traditions.

Additional reading:

Morrison, H. 2017. Education in the Middle East. [Online] Available at:

<http://chnm.gmu.edu/cyh/items/show/459>.

Nsamenang, A.B. & Tchombe, T.M.S. 2011. *Handbook of African educational theories and practices: a generative teacher educational curriculum*. Bamenda, Cameroon: Human Development Resource Centre. pp. 55–67.

Wadende, P., Oburu, P.O. & Morara, A. 2016. *African indigenous care-giving practices: stimulating early childhood development and education in Kenya*. [Online] Available at: <https://sajce.co.za/index.php/sajce/article/view/446/421>

Alternative constructions of childhood and children

In Activity 1.1 you reflected on your own ideas about children and childhood. Now that you have a historical perspective, have those ideas changed?

| Activity 1.6: Your own reflections on childhood and children | |
|---|---|
| Purpose | Reflect on and review your constructions of childhood. |
| Resources | |
| Task [30 minutes] | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Go back and read what you wrote about children and childhood in Activity 1.1. 2. Think about the different constructions you have read about and summarised on your timeline and think about your own cultural beliefs. Has your understanding of children and childhood changed? |

| | |
|-----------------|--|
| Response | In the <i>Evolution of childhood?</i> Chat forum: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comment on what has changed and what is the same about how you think about childhood. |
| Feedback | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read at least three other posts and comment on them. • Read other students' responses to your post. • Read the <i>Guided reflection on the activity</i>. |

Guided reflection on the activity

We have discussed a number of different understandings of childhood and children. All have relevance and meaning within their particular context and culture and all have challenges. Many of these constructions fail to consider children as human beings who *participate* actively in their own lives and are able to make significant contributions to their own lives. The emphasis is on the stages of development and not on a holistic development or the *well-being* of the child.

Prout (2005) argued that towards the end of the 20th century, there was growing criticism of how child psychology conceptualised childhood. 'The concern centred on an increasing awareness of and sensitivity to the social context of behaviour' (McDowall Clark, 2016: 10). These ideas were sparked by the work of social psychology, sociology and anthropology where attention was given to the social models of childhood.

Social, cultural and biological understandings of childhood and children inform current debates.

Additional reading:

Leonard, M. 2016. *The sociology of children: childhood and generation*. London: Sage.

Papatheodorou, T. 2012. Introduction: Early childhood policies and practices. In T. Papatheodorou (ed.). *Debates on early childhood policies and practices: global snapshots of pedagogical thinking and encounters*. London: Routledge.

Theme 2: The Being, Belonging and Becoming Child

Introduction

In this theme, we explore how different theoretical perspectives and discourses have influenced the construction of childhood and children. We explore the constructs of the being, belonging and becoming child. We consider:

Discourse: a formal discussion on a topic.

- The meaning of the construct being, belonging and becoming;
- Some of the discourse and theoretical perspectives that inform this construction of childhood and children;
- Concepts and principles that inform belonging, being and becoming; and
- The implications of these constructions for practice.

Figure 3 illustrates three contemporary constructions of childhood and children that have been influenced by different theoretical understandings. These three perspectives are the *being* child, the *belonging* child and the *becoming* child. They are not three distinct and separate constructs. We need to see them as interrelated and interlinked to explain the multiplicities of childhood and children.

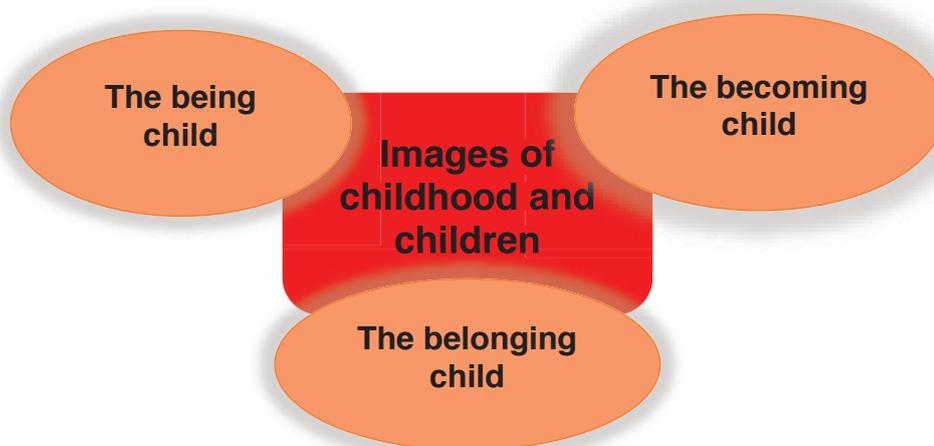


Figure 3 *Constructions of childhood: being, becoming and belonging*

Figure 4 provides a conceptual map for understanding the being, belonging and becoming child.

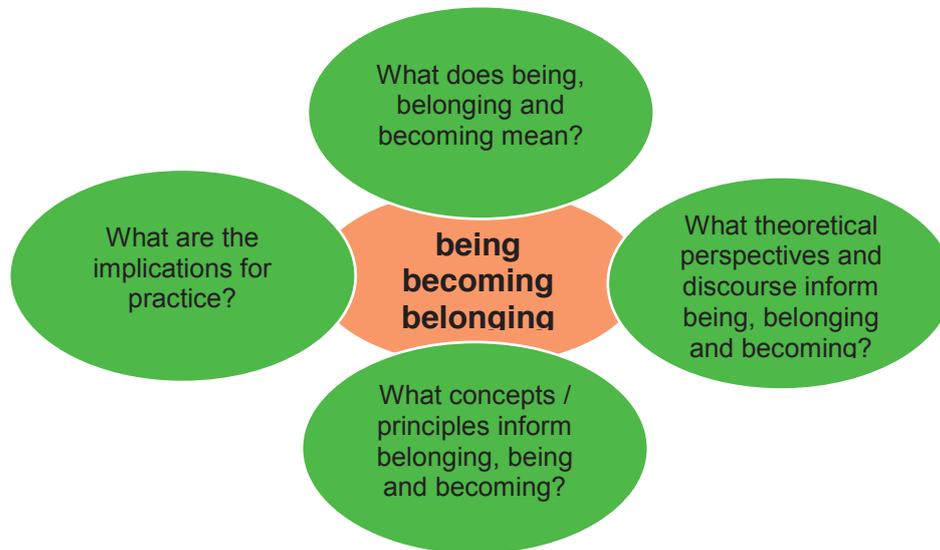


Figure 4 Conceptual map of being, belonging and becoming

Figure 5 provides a framework to explore the theory informing different constructions of childhood and children, the key concepts informing each construction and implications for practice. This holistic views acknowledges how diverse and complex the ideas are and safeguards issues of *diversity*, *equity* and *inclusion*.

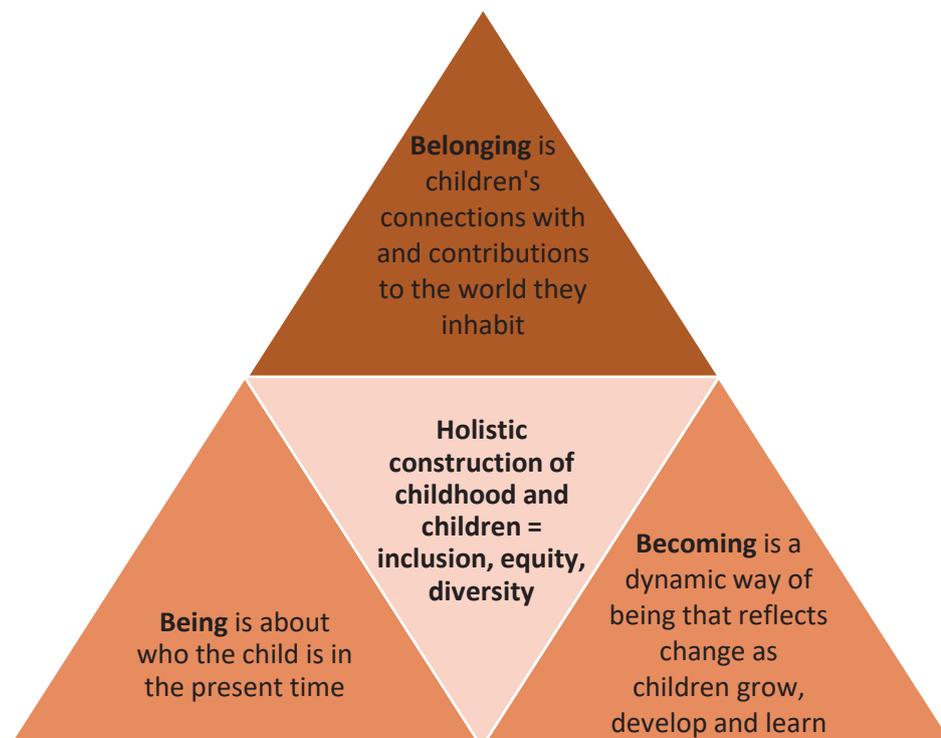


Figure 5 The holistic construction of childhood and children

What does being, belonging and becoming mean?

As already indicated, we view children's lives as represented by the constructs of belonging, being and becoming. From conception, children are connected to families, communities, cultures and places. Children's development, growth and learning take place through these relationships. The family is the child's first and most influential teacher. Children's interests develop through their *participation* in daily life and through this *participation*, they construct their own *identity* and understanding of the world.

In relation to **belonging**, knowing where and with whom you belong is pivotal to human existence. We belong to multiple groupings – the family, cultural groups, neighborhood groups and the wider community. When children have a sense of belonging, they are able to engage and *participate* with others in meaningful ways. Positive *relationships* are crucial to a sense of belonging in early childhood settings. Belonging shapes who children are and who they can become. Therefore, it is fundamental to the constructs of being and becoming.

The notion of the **belonging** child emphasises the cultural rather than the biological nature of children's development. Culture does not mean ethnicity or race but rather the forms of cultural development that are passed down from one generation to the next. These include values, ethics, morals, concepts and specific ways of thinking about and doing things valued in a particular community (Fleer, 2018: 16). Though biological influences are not discounted, the child's development is framed as a cultural process determined by the community in which the child grows and develops. Within the ECCE context, *relationships* with parents, teachers, peers and significant others are important to establish a sense of belonging in this space.

The construct of **being** acknowledges who the child is now and how in the present time, the child seeks and makes meaning of their world. It includes how children build and maintain *relationships* with others, how they *participate* in meaningful ways on a day-to-day basis, how they appreciate the joy and complexities of childhood, and how they meet the daily challenges of their everyday lives. Consequently, the focus of the early years of childhood should not only be about preparation for the future but should also focus on the here and now, i.e. the present time.

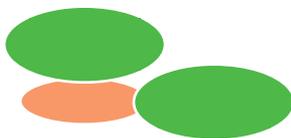
The **becoming** child refers to the rapid and significant changes that occur during childhood. Children's identities, knowledges, understandings, competencies, skills, *relationships*, attitudes and values are continually being shaped and reshaped during childhood. Consequently, the becoming child is moulded by different events, circumstances and interactions with significant others in their lives. Becoming reflects this process of change and development as children grow and learn. The emphasis is on learning to *participate* as full and active members of a society. Because becoming implies something yet to come (i.e. what the child will grow and develop into) it is often related to development theory where the focus is predominantly on child development (age and stage related milestones), which leads to a narrow interpretation of becoming.

Caldwell (2007: 782) argues that children and adults are continually becoming and re-becoming: 'we are not only what we are but we are also who we can become'. Frequently a lack of understanding of this dynamic aspect of the becoming child leads to a narrow understanding of childhood and children and a 'one size fits all'

understanding of child development. Burman (2008) maintains that these established ideas about the becoming child in early childhood education are characterised by an entrenched and unquestioning adherence to developmentalism.

| Activity 2.1: Being, belonging and becoming | |
|--|---|
| Purpose | Think about your own understanding of being, belonging and becoming. |
| Resources | |
| Task [40 minutes] | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Look at Figure 5 and read the accompanying text about being, belonging and becoming. 2. Think about what they mean to you. |
| Response | <p>In the <i>Being, Belonging and Becoming</i> chat forum, or in your study groups or small working groups, share your own examples and thoughts:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How do you connect to and contribute to the world around you (belong)? 2. How does your belonging affect who you are (being)? 3. How does your belonging affect how you grow, learn and change (becoming)? |
| Feedback | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read at least three other posts and provide constructive feedback. • Read the feedback and comments on your posts. |

Different theories and discourses about how childhood and children are constructed have informed these new constructions of early childhood and of early childhood practice. We will briefly outline some of these theories and discourses before looking at the implications for practice. Appropriate reading material will be suggested to further your insights.



Child development theories and discourses

As we have already said, child development discourses and theories have been strongly influenced by the work of early pioneers and contemporary theorists from the Western world. These have strongly influence the understanding of the becoming child. Drawing on disciplines such as sociology, anthropology and social justice alternative theories and discourses about children and childhood have informed new constructions of children and childhood.

At this stage it might be helpful to distinguish between a discourse and a theory.

You have probably had many conversations about why ECCE is important. These might have included that ECCE better prepares children for Grade 1, or that ECCE services lead to an improved economy. These discussions (or maybe debates) might have been verbal or written. These are called discourses. A **discourse** is really a conversation where people speak or write confidently and often convincingly about a topic. People present their personal ideas, and others can agree or disagree. Some of these ideas are based on sound research. For example, research shows that **quality** ECCE makes a difference to matric pass rates.

A **theory** is a group of related ideas which have a more scientific foundation. When careful research proves that there is factual and logic basis for these ideas they become a theory. The theorist or theorists thoroughly explore and collect evidence, and generate general principles to explain the ideas based on the research findings. A theory therefore provides an authoritative framework for explaining ideas.

In ECCE there are, for example, many different theories of child development. These include maturational theory (which gives milestones of development); cognitive theories (which provide insight into how children best learn); theories on behaviourism etc. Can you name some other theories of child development?

In this section, we briefly examine three development theories ecosystemic, neuroscience and sociocultural-historical theory. We have chosen to focus on these three theories to show how development theories link to and deepen understandings of the becoming, being and belonging child. We will explore some other development theories in Theme 3 so that you can consider how aspects of child development theories can interlink. Each theory can impact a teachers' implementation of ECCE practice and influence his/her understandings of the belonging, being and becoming child.

We hope that as you continue reading and studying you will think critically about your own construct of children. This could lead to a paradigm shift, changing the way you think about children.

Ecological system theory

Bronfenbrenner's theory on the ecology of human development emphasises the constantly changing and dynamic cultures in which children grow, with which they must interact and to which they must relate. The nature and quality of children's interactions continually change and this occurs within communities, cultures and wider societies all of which have their own definable and recognisable characteristics. Bronfenbrenner emphasised the importance of studying *development-in-context* or the *ecology of development* (Gray and MacBlain, 2015).

Notes for teacher educators and online facilitators

In the following activity teacher educators and students read Appendix One and watch a video.

In addition teacher educators should read *The importance of Uri Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological theory for early childhood education* (Tudge, J., Mercon-Vargas, E., Liang, Y. and Payir, A. 2016. Available at:

<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/308779201>)

You might decide to advise your students to also read this article. If you do, think about how you can make it accessible to students by, for example summarising the key points or annotating the article in some way.

If the students do not have access to the internet you need to make the reading and the video available to them offline. You will need to check the copyright and licence conditions.

| Activity 2.2: Ecological system theory | |
|---|--|
| Purpose | Think about your own understanding of being, belonging and becoming. |
| Resources | |
| Task [60 minutes] | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Read the notes in Appendix One. This is a brief explanation of Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Theory. 2. While you are reading, focus on how children’s individual contexts influence the way they engage and interact in different learning situations. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Make notes about how children’s contexts affect their sense of being, belonging and becoming? Focus on context, time spent on activities, engaged learning and interactions. 3. Watch the following YouTube video: <i>Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory</i> by Lisa Roundy Available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5htRhvm4iyI <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. While you are watching think about how the working patterns of parents affect children’s sense of being and belonging. |
| Response | <p>In the <i>Being, Belonging and Becoming</i> chat forum, or in your study groups or small working groups, share your thoughts about:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How does the theory help us understand how all children (regardless of their educational needs or disabilities) can achieve a sense of being, belonging and becoming? |
| Feedback | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read at least three other posts and provide constructive feedback. • Read the feedback and comments on your posts. |

Guided reflection on activity

The Ecological Systems Theory describes how the child's environment positively or negatively influences growth and development. The focus is on how factors within each system interact with one another.

The microsystem has the greatest influence in the life of the child. An example of positive influences in the microsystem could be a responsive and caring relationship with the child's primary caregivers (ideally the mother and father). This promotes a sense of being and belonging for the child. Parental neglect and indifference would be an example of a non-supportive microsystem.

Within the exosystem, a functional community support system could promote a feeling of safety, both physically and psychologically. Feelings of safety enhance the child's feelings of wellbeing and of being loved and cared for. These feelings in turn promote positive self-esteem which leads to a sense of belonging. Children who feel emotionally comfortable are better able to participate and interact with others. This enables children to develop a sense of agency and allows us to recognise the child for what he is currently able to do (this affirms the being child). This positive environment also acknowledges that children are growing and developing, and so takes cognisance of the becoming child. Each system will influence the other structures within the system and ultimately influence the child's development and learning.

Neuroscience

"Neuroscience specialises in studying how different parts of the nervous system function and the optimum conditions for development – and how these can go wrong" (Conbayir, 2017:4). Neurons are the building blocks of the brain. The growth of new neurones – neurogenesis – begins after conception and continues throughout an individual's life. At birth the brain contains billions of neurons. Under favourable circumstances the neurons continue to multiply and become increasingly dense (concentrated). This increase in the number and structure of the neurones is called neural plasticity.

Neural plasticity is quickest during early childhood and is influenced by positive and negative environmental experiences and interactions. Positive experiences include adequate stimulation and repetition of experiences. These experiences strengthen the neural pathways and allow children to reach their best learning and development potential.

In recent years, research has confirmed the importance of adequate stimulation on early brain development and the importance of critical periods in early learning (Shonkoff and Phillips, 2000). For example, if children have not acquired language in their early years, they might experience difficulty in acquiring these skills in later years in comparison to their peers. The National Scientific Council on the Developing Child (2010: 1) has concluded that "the experiences children have early in life – and the environments in which they have them – shape their developing brain architecture and strongly affect whether they grow up to be healthy, productive members of society." Early childhood experiences will have a lifelong influence on outcomes in health, learning and development (Richter et al., 2012). Neuroscientific research strongly suggests that we re-think the influence of the circumstances and experiences to which young children are exposed (Papatheodorou, 2012).

Notes for teacher educators and online facilitators

In preparation for the next activity watch the whole of the video *From Birth to Two: the Neuroscience of Infant Development* available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1pD50ISxP3k>.

This is a long video. While you are watching think about these questions:

1. How can a lack of appropriate stimulation negatively influence brain development?
2. What impact could that have on the child's sense of being and belonging?
3. How does adequate stimulation promote optimal child development and learning.

The video in Activity 2.3 for students is a shorter video. It is openly licensed, so you can ask your IT department to download it so students can access it. It is related to the idea of the kind of environment we need to provide for young children to be able to develop and learn. Watch this video yourself, too.

Use what you understand from the first video to explain some of the deeper ideas to students. You can also identify sections for students to watch, and during a face to face session show the sections to students to deepen their understanding.

Activity 2.3: Neuroscience

| | |
|--|---|
| Purpose | To explore what makes a stimulating learning environment that leads to supportive experiences for optimal early childhood development |
| Resources | An early learning environment, video |
| Task [60 minutes] [plus an additional 60 minutes to watch the video] | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Observe an everyday activity (for example playing with blocks) that is presented to babies (about 6 months of age), toddlers (between 1 to 2 years and young children (between 2-4 years) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Briefly describe each activity b. What makes this a stimulating activity? c. How do you know this? d. Could this activity be improved in any way? If so explain. 2. Watch the video called Understanding Trauma: Learning Brain vs Survival Brain at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KoqaUANGvpA 3. While you are watching think about: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. How can a safe, playful environment promote positive child development and learning? b. How can a toxic or stressful environment hinder child development and learning? c. What impact could that have on the child's sense of being and belonging? |

| | |
|------------------------|---|
| | <p>d. How can we provide a safe environment for young children?</p> <p>4. If you are able to watch a longer video, watch the whole of the video <i>From Birth to Two: the Neuroscience of Infant Development</i> available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1pD50ISxP3k. You will need internet access to watch it. While you are watching think about the relationship between what the two videos are telling you. Use these questions to guide your thinking:</p> <p>a. How can a lack of appropriate stimulation negatively influence brain development?</p> <p>b. What impact could that have on the child's sense of being and belonging?</p> <p>c. How does adequate stimulation promote optimal child development and learning.</p> |
| <p>Response</p> | <p>In the <i>Being, Belonging and Becoming</i> chat forum, or in your study groups or small working groups:</p> <p>1. Share your main thoughts and responses to the activities and the video.</p> |
| <p>Feedback</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read at least three other posts and provide constructive feedback. • Read the feedback and comments on your posts. |

Guided reflection on activity

The comparison in the video about the *Learning brain versus the survival brain* helps us to see that an unsafe, toxic or traumatic environment can distract the brain from being able to learn.

In the long video there are images of neurons, synaptic connections and what the developing brain looks like. There are also images of dense neural connections, and pictures of developing brains where the neural connectivity is insignificant. In children who lack appropriate nurturing and stimulation the neural connectivity is sparse. These different images of the brain show the importance of appropriate stimulation to increase the neural connectivity of the brain. Appropriate stimulation includes interacting and talking with children (even babies), offering them suitable opportunities to explore and discover their environment as well as when appropriate facilitating numerous age appropriate activities with the children. In this type of environment children will develop positive feelings of being and belonging as well as meet expectations in relationship to development and becoming a more competent child.

It is not appropriate to leave babies to cry for lengthy periods in their cots or to shout at toddlers or to not provide them with sufficient stimulation. When young children

are accommodated in impoverished environments their brain density is not given the opportunity to develop in an optimal way. In this scenario children do not feel a sense of being and belonging. Neither are they able to grow and develop sufficiently and so the process of becoming is also hampered.

Think about how you can offer children in your care a safe, caring and stress-free environment that will enhance brain development and increase feelings of being, belonging and becoming.

Additional reading

Conbayir, M. 2017. *Early Childhood and Neuroscience: Theory, Research and Implications for Practice*. Bloomsbury.

Sociocultural-historical theory

This theory highlights and raises awareness that not only *what* and *how* we learn is relevant but also *what* and *how* we learn is influenced by the cultural spaces that we inhabit. From this perspective, children are conceptualised holistically and part of their immediate environment and culture (Papatheodorou, 2011). These theories set out a holistic perspective on child development in which cultural and biological development are intertwined. Consequently cultural practices are valued and enhanced.

Notes for teacher educators and online facilitators

1. Appendix Two provides a brief overview of socio-cultural theory on which Activity 2.4 is based. Appendix Two draws on an article by Marilyn Fleer. This article can be found online. The details are: Fleer, M. 2015. A cultural-historical view of child development: key concepts for going beyond a universal view of the child. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Research in Early Childhood Education*, 9(1): 19–37. If you want students to read this article and they do not have internet access download it from <http://dx.doi.org/10.17206/apjrece.2015.9.1.19> and give them a copy. It is not openly licenced so if you want to put it into a learning guide you will need to get permission through your library services.

| Activity 2.4: Sociocultural historical theories | |
|--|--|
| Purpose | |
| Resources | |
| Task [50 minutes] | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Read Appendix Two. It gives a brief overview of sociocultural historical theory. Much of this summary has been drawn from an article by M. Fleer, 2015. <i>A cultural-historical view of child development: key concepts for going beyond a universal view of the child</i>. 2. While you are reading, identify and highlight key concepts that relate to being, belonging and |

| | |
|-----------------|--|
| | becoming from a sociocultural-historical perspective. |
| Response | <p>In the <i>Being, Belonging and Becoming</i> chat forum, or in your study groups or small working groups, share your thoughts about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does sociocultural-historical theory help us understand the being, becoming and belonging child a little bit differently? |
| Feedback | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read your peers' posts in the forum • Think about how your peers' comments affect your responses. • Read the <i>Guided reflection on the activity</i>. |

Guided reflection on activity

Cultural-historical theory proposes that child development should be explored from a cultural perspective with a focus on the importance of child development within their specific community. It includes cultural dimensions such as the values, practices and customs within a family, community or society that shape the child's development. This framework merges social and personal factors and shows how they both impact the child. The theory highlights the importance of social interactions and responsive connections between adults and children.

These social interactions enhance children's personal well-being and sense of belonging. Positive feelings of acceptance and competence are reinforced because the social nature of learning is highlighted and opportunities are provided for children to explore ideas through their own motivation. Through their everyday and critical periods of development children are also becoming. So development takes cognisance of the need to belong, to be recognised as competent and to recognise those ongoing changes as the child progresses through childhood.

Additional reading

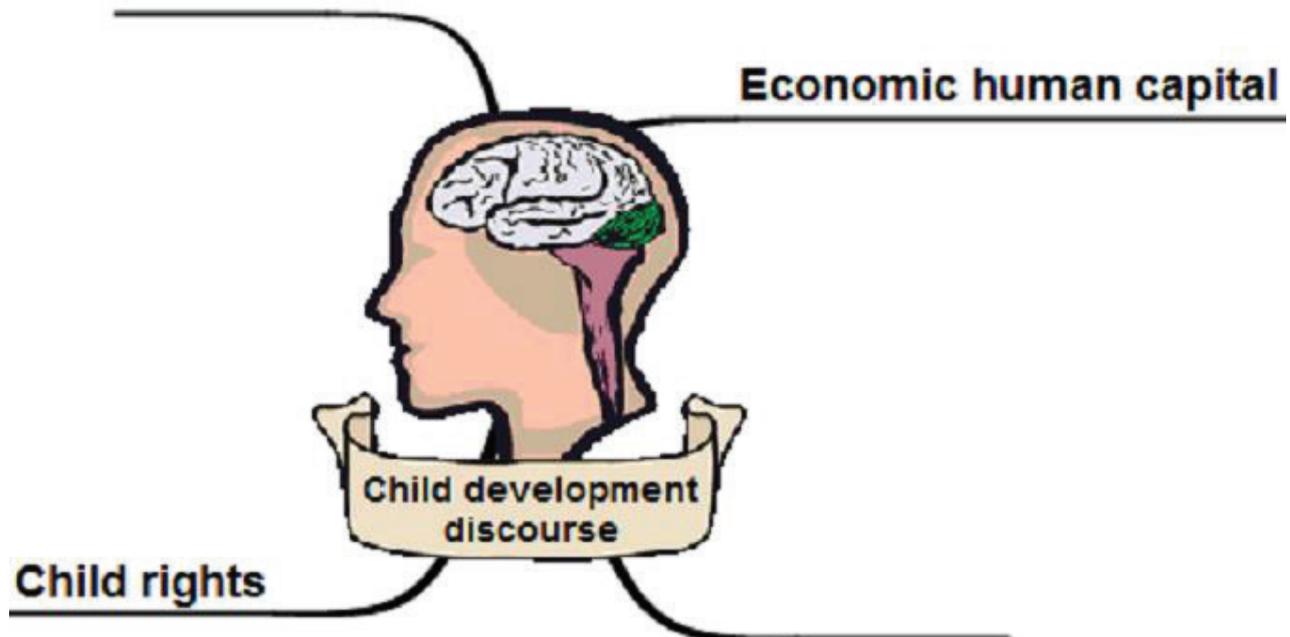
Fleer, M. 2010. *Early learning and development: cultural-historical concepts in play*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Economic Human Capital and Child Rights Discourses

Two important discourses have in more recent years influenced our understandings of child development. These discourses encourage us to view child development from a cultural historical perspective and contribute to the notion of a belonging and being child. These are the Economic Human Capital discourse and the Child Rights discourse (see Appendix Three).

Below is the beginning of a mind map which identifies some of the discourses influences the conversations in relation to child development.

In the next activity you will create a mind map similar to this one, and elaborate it.



Do Activity 2.5 to think about what you already know about what we call the ‘economic human capital’ discourse and a ‘child rights’ discourse.

| Activity 2.5: Early childhood discourse | |
|---|---|
| Purpose | To find out what we already know and think about why ECCE is important |
| Resources | |
| Task [60 minutes] | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Draw (by hand or digitally) a mind map similar to the one you have just seen. 2. On the mind map write down key words and phrases about why you think ECD is important for society and for children. Try and categorise your thoughts into those that you think support the economic human capital discourse and those that support the children’s rights discourse. Some of your thoughts might not fit easily into a category, and some of them might fit into both categories. Adapt your mind map to reflect how you think. 3. Read Appendix Three about human capital and children’s rights discourses. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Are these ideas the same or different to the ones you wrote on your mind map? |

| | |
|-----------------|--|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> b. Add any new ideas to your mind map c. Remove or adapt ideas you wrote on your mind map. |
| Response | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Save your (digital) mind map, or take a photograph of it. • In the <i>Being, Belonging and Becoming</i> chat forum, or in your Whatsapp group, or in your small group share your mind map and invite other people to comment on it. |
| Feedback | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share, discuss and give constructive feedback on each other's mind maps. • Read the <i>Guided reflection on the activity</i>. |

Guided reflection on activity

Let's consider Economic Human Capital discourse. There is now overwhelming evidence that investing in ECCE leads to improved child outcomes. For example, the provision of quality ECCE is considered important for a number of reasons, including the promotion of children's rights, economic development, addressing the skills crisis, redressing social and economic disparities and race and gender inequalities, promotion of democracy and so on. (Department of Basic Education 2012: 5-7). To achieve this, ECCE programmes and services must be of good quality, providing nurturing care and stimulating education opportunities. Improved outcomes include better academic performance and improved employment opportunities. This is a long term view focusing on the becoming child.

Because children have been cared for and educated in a favourable environment they have better social skills and are more likely to form lasting relationships in later life (which relates to a sense of belonging). In early (and later) childhood they have been successful. These feelings of success lead to higher self-esteem and confidence. Children are increasingly recognised as active participants in their own world (being child). Can you see how these ideas of the belonging, being and becoming child align well with each other, especially if children have positive experiences?

But the opposite could also happen – when a programme becomes driven by the expectation that children must achieve and be prepared for Grade 1 the programme can become too prescriptive and didactic. This could mean children's social and emotional development becomes secondary and the emphasis is placed on reaching specific milestones and predetermined outcomes. This approach supports the idea of a development child where the emphasis is on age and stage relationships; the voice of the child becomes negated.

A Child Rights discourse emphasises the being child. It acknowledges children as active citizens with the right to participate and to voice their views, needs and wants. Children have the right to be nurtured, educated and to be heard. In a Child Rights discourse children (and all living things) are treated respectfully. The idea of democratic citizenship links to a sense of belonging and being. Becoming a

democratic citizen who is gainfully employed, links back to Economic Human Capital Theory.

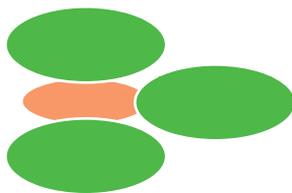
Can you make some further links between these two discourses and show how they support constructions of the being, belonging and becoming child.

Additional reading

Moss, P. 2012. Readiness, partnership, a meeting place? Some thoughts on the possible relationship between early childhood and compulsory education. *Forum*, 54(3): 355–368.

Moss, P. 2013. The relationship between early childhood and compulsory education: a properly political question. In Moss, P. (Ed.). *Early childhood education and compulsory education*. Oxford: Routledge. 2–49.

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Concepts and principles of being, belonging and becoming

In this section, we outline the concepts informing the construction of the being, belonging and becoming child, and how these concepts influence practice.

You will have noticed as you were reading and talking that these ideas are mentioned often in theories and discourses:

- Relationships and connectedness;
- Identity;
- Voice, participation and agency;
- A strong sense of well-being;
- Diversity and inclusion.

Before you do the activity read about these ideas in Appendix Four.

Activity 2.6: Concepts and principles

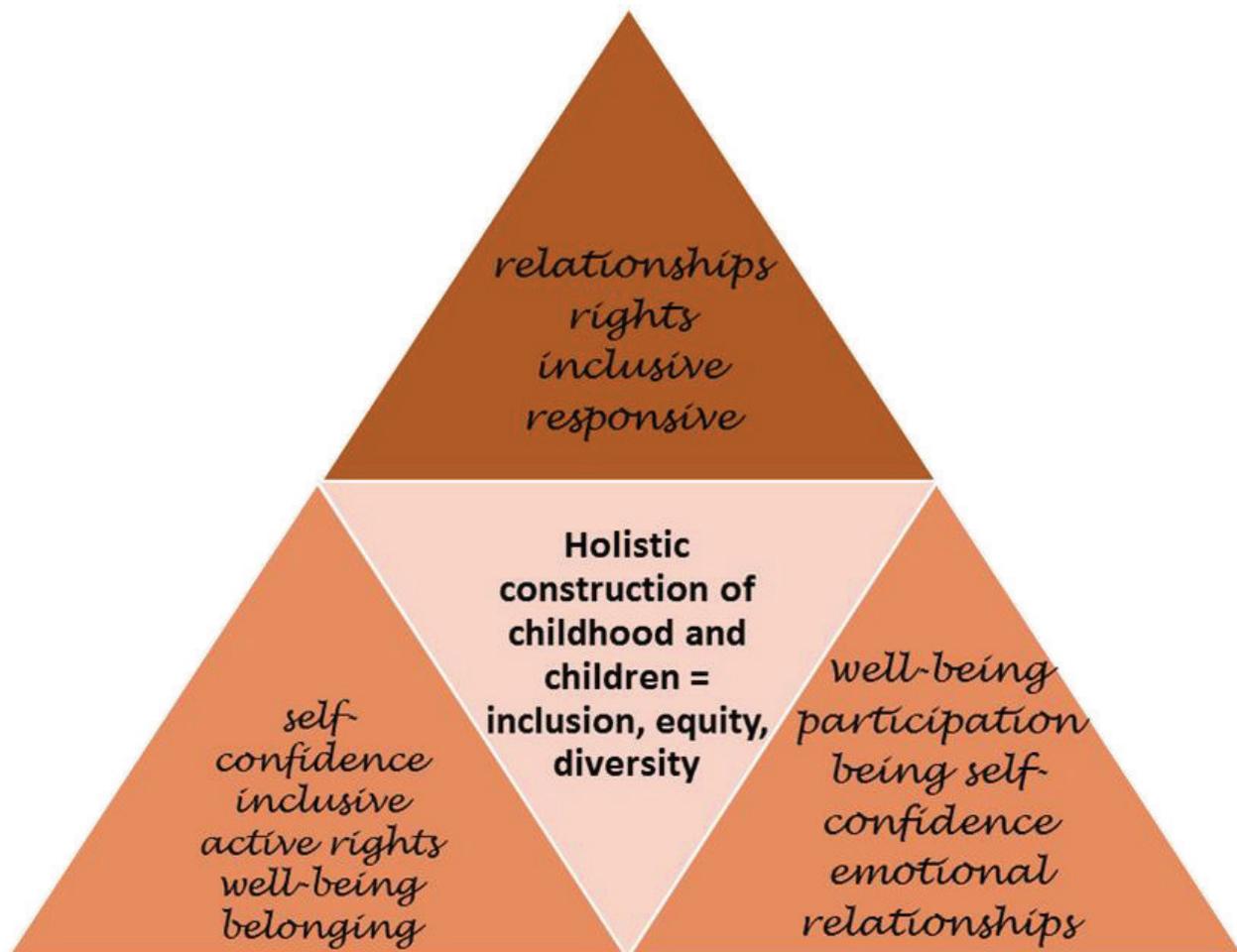
| | |
|-----------------------------|--|
| Purpose | To think about and understand key ideas and principles behind being, belonging and becoming constructions of children and childhood. |
| Resources | |
| Task [60 minutes] | 1. Read the concepts in Appendix Four: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Relationships and connectedness; |

| | |
|-----------------|--|
| | <p>b. Identity; c. Voice, participation and agency; d. A strong sense of well-being; e. Diversity and inclusion.</p> <p>2. By hand or digitally re-draw Figure 5, without the writing in the outside triangles, like this:</p> <div style="text-align: center;"> </div> <p>3. Read Appendix Four again. While you are reading think about how each concept fits into the 'constructions of childhood' triangle/s.</p> <p>4. Write key words for each concept in the triangle/s you think are appropriate.</p> |
| Response | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Save your (digital) 'childhood triangle', or take a photograph of it. • In the <i>Being, Belonging and Becoming</i> chat forum, or in your Whatsapp group, or in your small group share your drawing or photograph and invite other people to comment on it. |
| Feedback | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share, discuss and give constructive feedback on each other's drawings. • Read the <i>Guided reflection on the activity</i>. |

Guided reflection on activity

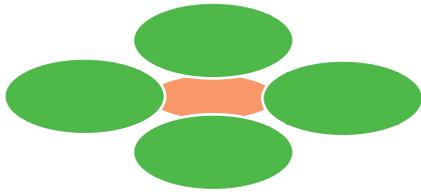
You might have repeated some of the concepts in more than one of the triangles. This is not surprising because it reflects the complexity and integrated nature of childhood and children.

Our example looks like this. How does it compare with what you wrote?



Additional reading:

- Raburu, P.A. 2015. The Self – Who Am I? Children’s identity and development through early childhood education. *Journal of Educational and Social Research*. 5(1): 95–102. [Online] Available at: <https://www.mcser.org/journal/index.php/jesr/article/view/5600/5403>
- Manning-Morton, J. 2014. *Exploring the well-being in the early years*. Chapters 1 and 2. Berkshire: McGraw Hill.
- Siraj-Blatchford, I. 2014. Diversity, inclusion and learning in the early years. In G. Pugh & B. Duffy. (Eds). *Contemporary issues in the early years*. 6th ed. London: Sage. 181–197.
- Owen, A. 2016. Inclusion. In I. Palaiologou. (Ed.). *The early years foundation stage theory and practice*. London: Sage



Implications for practice

You have done a lot of reading, and have engaged with a number of different theories, ideas and debates. Now it is time to think about what does this mean in practice, as an ECCE teacher.

The same concepts that you engaged with in Activity 2.6 can help you to reflect on your own practice, and to design, plan and implement an ECCE programme that is contextually and culturally responsive to both the early childhood setting and the child:

- Relationships and connectedness;
- Identity;
- Voice;
- Participation and agency;
- Well-being;
- Diversity; and
- Inclusion.

Notes for teacher educators and online facilitators

- In Activity 2.7 students do an observation.
- Make it part of WIL.
- If you are running this as an online course you will think about how to support students during their WIL, and how they can support each other. You might find some useful advice in the [PIECCE Programme Framework Chapter on WIL](#) at

Give students an observation sheet divided into rows and columns. Make a space for students to write their name and number at the top of the sheet. There should also be a space for the date and the age cohort observed. Look at the example in Activity 2.7.

Activity 2.7: Being, belonging and becoming childhood in practice

| | |
|-----------------------------|--|
| Purpose | Observe children in an ECCE site. |
| Resources | Observation instruments |
| Task [90 minutes] | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Observe children in an early learning centre. In a separate hand written or Word document, use points a – h to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Describe the relationships between the children and the ECCE teacher. b. Provide examples of how the teacher offers emotional support through her relationship and connectedness with the children. c. Give one example of how the ECCE teacher bridges the home/ECCE site divide. d. Reflect on the importance of friendships, peers and play in the formation of identities in young children. e. Describe at least two situations where children are given the opportunity to express voice, participation and agency. f. Interview the teacher to find out how she enables (or does not) children to give expression to their voice, participation and agency in the early childhood setting. g. Reflect on the inclusive culture in the ECCE site where you are observing. h. Make a general comment to show how you think the different concepts support the being, belonging and becoming of children in the ECCE site. |
| Response | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the chat forum <i>Being, belonging and becoming</i> share your general comments about how the different concepts support the being, belonging and becoming of children in the ECCE site. |
| Feedback | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read at least three general comments from other student posts and comment on them. • Read comments on your own post. • Read the <i>Guided reflection on the activity</i>. |

Guided reflection on the activity

This is an example of how you could record your observations for this Activity.

| Observation activity | Description and example | Connections to belonging, being and becoming |
|--|--|---|
| a. Relationships between children and ECCE teacher. | 2yr age group. Four children playing outside with construction toys. Teacher sits on mat, talking to children, suggesting how they can build a tower. She smiles, nods, and talks about what children are doing. | Children feel secure – physically and emotionally. They are encouraged to try and praised when succeed (belonging) Teacher listens to all children, interacts with them and when Sipho snatches a block from Marie gently suggests that he returns it to her (Being) Children are given opportunity to explore and discover on their own terms (becoming) |
| b. Examples of teacher offering emotional support through relationships and connectedness. | | |

Reflection on discourse and theories in the construction of children and childhood

Different theories and discourses about how childhood and children are constructed inform early childhood practice. By drawing on a range of theories and discourse topics you are able to challenge traditional ways of seeing children, teaching and learning. You need to ask yourself questions such as:

- Why do I act in the way that I do?
- What does this mean for children and their learning?
- Do I consider the consequences of my actions for children’s learning, growth and development?
- Am I able to find new ways of working fairly and justly in the best interests of all stakeholders?
- Do I reflect on my practice?

Reflecting on these questions, should help you strengthen your pedagogic practice to promote children’s growth, learning and development by:

- Making use of holistic approaches to teaching and learning;
- Being responsive to children’s needs, interests and strengths, including issues of diversity;
- Planning and implementing playful pedagogies;
- Intentional teaching;
- Creating safe and conducive learning environments;
- Valuing the social and cultural contexts and indigenous knowledge systems of children and their families;
- Observing and assessing children’s learning; and
- Ensuring the smooth transition from the home to the early childhood setting (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009).

In this section we have highlighted some practices that we consider important to guide curriculum implementation to ensure that a holistic approach to the construction of children is adopted. Curriculum implementation and pedagogical practices will be covered in much more detail in other modules. However, we hope that when you teach these modules they will be underpinned by the construction of the being, belonging and becoming child.

Notes for teacher educators and online facilitators

Stop and Think!

- What are you doing in the ECCE Diploma to support your student teachers in their journey of being, belonging and becoming an ECCE teacher?
- Look for the PIECCE Illustrative Pack on *Being and Becoming a Professional ECCE Teacher*

Theme 3: The Developmental Child

Introduction

As mentioned in Theme 1, the child-study movement was influenced by developmental psychology with a focus on the identification of ages, stages and development milestones. Development theory considers both *growth* and *maturation*.

Growth is the physical process of development, particularly the process of becoming physically larger. Growth is influenced by genetics and it is quantifiable – it can be measured. For example, if a child grows 3 cm, you can measure the growth. Closely related to the process of growth is the process of maturation. *Maturation* is the process by which we change, grow and develop throughout life. There are different types of maturation, for example, physical, intellectual, social, emotional and language. Maturation is influenced by both genetics and the environment. Maturation is qualitative in nature, for example, going from crawling to walking shows a change in the quality of movement.

Development theory provides an understanding of how children progress through various stages of their growth and maturation. Development theories have provided us with a way of identifying different areas of development called development domains. Whilst the domains can be described as separate entities, we need to view development as a holistic construction.

Holistic development

We need an in-depth understanding of the domains and principles of development in order to make links with the construct of the being, belonging and becoming child. Development is dynamic; it involves ongoing changes to the child's growth, development and competencies. These changes often happen in an orderly and logical way. But development is also impacted by a multitude of factors such as the child's context, culture, socioeconomic conditions and so on. We need to be aware of diversity and difference and appreciate that many different variations in development are as a result of life experiences. Knowledge of child development will help ECCE teachers interact with children in different ways, plan curriculum programmes, observe and identify children with different needs and appreciate diversity and difference so as to enhance children's rights and participation.

Principles of development

Principles of development provide a way of understanding the dynamic changes that occur in the various development domains. These principles are:

- Children's development is holistic.
All domains or aspects of development are interrelated and interdependent. Development occurs across the different domains and development in one domain is influenced by, and influences, development in other domains.
- Children's development is cumulative.
Development begins at conception and is a continuous, ongoing process. Each stage of development builds on a previous stage. For example, children

must develop head control to be able to sit independently; and babbling precedes speech.

- Children's development is reasonably predictable.
All children follow the same sequence of development but the rate differs. All children sit before they can walk but they might do this at different ages. For example, some children will walk at nine months, some at eighteen months while others will only walk at 2 years of age. Figure 6 shows another way in which development is more or less predictable. Development occurs from the midline to the outside (proximal to distal) and from the head to the feet (cephalocaudal). For example, children gain head control before they sit and they sit before they walk, and so on.

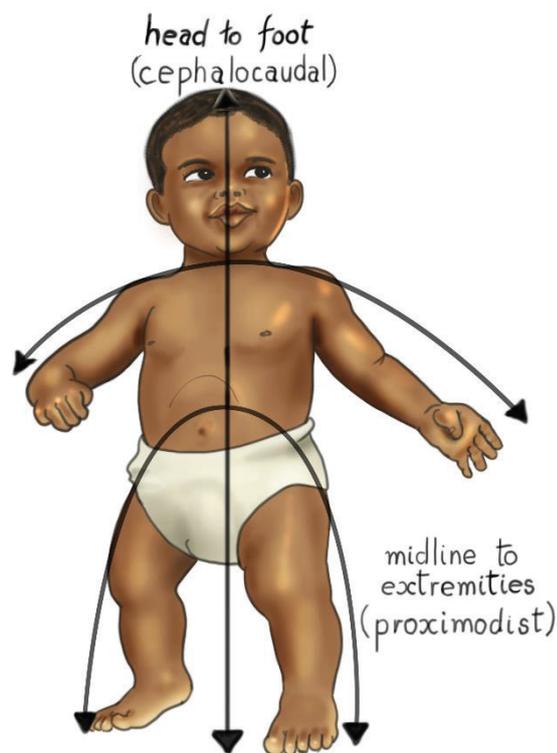


Figure 6 Proximodistal development

Redrawn from <https://www.tes.com/lessons/XdpbyGPsuFi4ow/brain-growth-and-physical-development>

- Children's development is influenced by a number of determinants. There is an intricate interdependence between biological (genetic) and sociocultural (environment) factors. Learning and development occurs in children because of who they are and what they experience.
- Children's development is characterised by individual difference. Within any group of children, there is a variation in the pace of individual progress between, and within, different development areas.

Development domains

It is important for you to understand that children's development is holistic, individual and multi-dimensional. However, for ease of understanding and describing development patterns, it is useful to divide development into different domains.

These include the well-known development domains of:

- Physical development;
- Cognitive or intellectual development;
- Linguistic development;
- Emotional development; and
- Social development.

However, we also need to consider creative development, perceptual motor development, and moral/spiritual development. For each development domain, milestones have been identified for specific ages and stages of development.

Additional reading

Neaum, S. 2016. *Child development for early years students and practitioners*. 3rd ed. London: Sage.

Charlesworth, R. 2016. *Understanding child development*. Boston, MA: Wadsworth.

Gordon, A. M. & Browne, K. 2017. *Beginnings and beyond: foundations in early childhood education*. 10th edition. Boston, MA: Cengage Learning.

Trawick Smith, J. 2013. *Early childhood development: a multicultural perspective*. 6th edition. New Jersey: Pearson.

Development and learning theories

In the construction of the developmental child, we need to draw on a number of theories to ensure that we conceptualise the child in a holistic way. This is because many theories focus on one development domain rather than on the multiplicities of domains. For example, Gesell is a maturational theorist, Piaget is a constructivist theorist whilst Erikson explores psychosocial development. Table 1 provides an overview of some of the theorists that are considered important for child development and presents a brief outline of the important features of the theory.

Notes for teacher educators and online facilitators

In Activity 3.1 students engage very briefly with some development and learning theories. This is not an in-depth exploration of any of the theories. You may have already covered, or planned to explore these theories in much more depth in your diploma programme, to give them the respect they deserve. The purpose of referring to them here is to get students to think critically about these theories in relation to the new construction of being, belonging and becoming.

Read the theory summaries in Table 1, and then do Activity 3.1.

Table 1 Overview of theories of child development and learning

Source: Adapted from Excell and Linington, 2020.

| Theory and theorists | Important features of theory | Relationship to being, belonging and becoming |
|--|---|---|
| Behaviourist: Skinner, Watson | Learning through external environmental stimulus. Classical conditioning – stimulus-response approach. Example: A child listens to the teacher, is successful and gets a star as the reward. Through practice and repetition, a child acquires skills. Example: Riding a bicycle. | |
| Behaviourist / social cognitive theory: Bandura | Learning occurs through imitation and role modelling. Example: A child observes adult behaviour and acts similarly. A child observes the teacher doing star jumps and then is asked to jump in the same way. | |
| Constructivist: Piaget | Development leads learning. Children are active, sensorimotor learners. Example: Children learn through exploration and discovery. Play is important | |
| Social constructivist: Vygotsky | Learning leads development. Zone of proximal development. Language and social interaction are pivotal for learning. Play, specifically socio-dramatic play, is important in learning. Adults mediate a child's learning by suggesting, for example, how to complete the puzzle. | |
| Psychosexual: | A child has three main | |

| | | |
|--|---|--|
| Freud | phases of development – oral, anal and psychosexual. Behaviour is controlled by the id, ego and superego. | |
| Psychosocial: Erikson | Series of stages, ideally, each being successfully resolved before moving on to the following stage. Example: If a baby's needs are met, she learns to trust and can then move to the next stage of development which is to start gaining autonomy. | |
| Moral development: Kohlberg | Outlines stages of moral development (understanding of right and wrong). | |
| Attachment theory: Bowlby, Ainsworth, Brazelton | Early attachment to a primary caregiver is essential for positive emotional development and the building of social relationships. Example: A caring, nurturing relationship with a primary caregiver allows a child to interact positively with others. Often the negative effects of poor attachment in infancy will only become noticeable during later childhood or even in adulthood. | |
| Theory of needs: Maslow | There is a hierarchy of human needs. Basic physiological needs come first followed by safety needs, belonging needs, self-esteem needs and at the top, when all other needs are met, self-actualisation. Example: A child who receives adequate food, water and security, can then progress to having the need for belonging met. | |
| Normative/Maturational theory: | Identifies a series of age/stage norms for all | |

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| Gesell, Sheridan | aspects of development. Milestones established for each specific stage/age of development. | |
| Ecological systems theory: Bronfenbrenner | Individuals are viewed within their culture and their specific environmental contexts are taken into account when reviewing development and learning. This theory explores in ever-widening circles how the immediate environment (home, school, etc. and more distant factors, such as, politics and the economy) affects a child's life experience including his learning. | |

Activity 3.1: Development and learning theories

| | |
|-----------------------------|--|
| Purpose | Engage with some of the important theories on child development and think about how they relate to the construction of the being, belonging and becoming child. |
| Resources | |
| Task [45 minutes] | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Read Table 1 again. 2. Highlight points in each theory that you think relate to or impact on the child's being, belonging and becoming. 3. Copy the table digitally or by hand, and make your own notes in the last column about the points you have highlighted. 4. Think of the different development domains and how context (culture, nutrition, poverty, families, health, social services, etc.) may promote or impede development. 5. What do you think this means for how we use theory to inform our practice? |
| Response | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the <i>being, belonging and becoming</i> chat forum write one or two key ideas about the relationship between child development and the being, |

| | |
|-----------------|---|
| | belonging and becoming child. In other words how does the construct of being, belonging and becoming align with that of child development . |
| Feedback | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read at least three other student posts and comment on them. • Read comments on your own post. • Read the <i>Guided reflection on the activity</i>. |

Guided reflection on activity

We need to use theory to inform our practice, but we don't have to choose only one theory. In ECCE we make use of many different theories and adopt a diverse approach to promote holistic development (see theme1). This means we use theory in an integrated way to ensure that each child is viewed as a unique individual with specific strengths and competencies that have been acquired through that child's life experiences and family and cultural contexts. Therefore no two children can be viewed through the same lens. If, for example, we want to assess physical development we not only need to look at maturational theory for an idea of desirable milestones, we also need to consider Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems approach as well as historical –cultural theory to obtain a complete understanding of that child's progress. This would include her strengths and weaknesses, factors related to family and community and the cultural practices that impact the child.

Implications for practice

It is important that all teachers have an in-depth knowledge of the contextual and development factors that can impact a child's growth, learning and development. Such knowledge will guide your professional practice and enable you to provide support for all the children you work with.

In Activity 3.2 you will read a case study and need to think about the implications of focusing only on development milestones to the exclusion of other aspects that also influence development and learning.

| Activity 3.2: A case study | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| Purpose | Reflect on development milestones for teaching and learning. |
| Resources | |
| Task [45 minutes] | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Read the following case study and answer the questions that follow: <div style="background-color: #D3D3D3; padding: 5px;"> <p>Jabu and Siphon are friends and they enjoy playing with each other at the early childhood centre that they attend. Siphon is three years and six months</p> </div> |

| | |
|-----------------|---|
| | <p>old. He comes from a relatively impoverished home where he receives little educational support. Jabu is three years and two months old and receives a lot of parental encouragement and support. They spend a lot of time playing together in the different learning spaces at the centre. They especially enjoy playing in the block corner with their toy cars. They also participate willingly in the visual art activities that Teacher June plans. Teacher June has noticed that Siphso struggles to hold a pair of scissors and to cut paper along the line. She is worried because Jabu can cut along the line and he is younger than Siphso. June decides Siphso needs intervention to help him achieve the development milestone that is expected of him – cutting along a line by age three.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. How do you think the teacher should have responded? Provide reasons for your answer. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Should she actively intervene because the development norm is for three-year olds to be able to hold a pair of scissors and cut along the line? Should she send Siphso for occupational therapy because he seems to have a developmental delay? <i>Or</i> b. Should she provide appropriate playful opportunities for Siphso to practice the necessary skills? 3. How do your own cultural views of children influence your response to what the teacher did and what you think she should have done? |
| Response | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share your response to question 2 in the <i>being, belonging and becoming</i> chat forum |
| Feedback | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read at least three other students' posts and comment on them. • Read comments on your own post. • Read the <i>Guided reflection on the activity</i>. |

Guided reflection on the activity

The developmental model views children and childhood as a series of biological stages. By deciding that Siphso required intervention, Teacher June has adopted a *deficit* development approach and not taken Siphso's home context into account. She has failed to consider what constitutes a contextually appropriate and culturally

relevant view of development. An alternative approach might have been to provide plenty of play-based opportunities for Siphon to develop his cutting skills and competency. She could then monitor Siphon's progress through careful observation and assessment procedures.

Additional reading

Charlesworth, R. 2016. *Understanding child development*. Boston, MA: Wadsworth.

Notes for teacher educators and online facilitators

This is a journal activity.

Introduce students to journal, provide support, can be used throughout their studies to become an ECCE professional.

Think about how you can link the development of a journal over the life of the ECCE programme to the ideas about being a reflective practitioner in the PIECCE Illustrative Pack *Being and Becoming a Professional Teacher*

Activity 3.3: Reflect on your own practice: a journal activity

| | |
|-----------------------------|--|
| Purpose | To reflect in your journal about your own practice in promoting the idea of being, belonging and becoming for young children. |
| Resources | Your digital or handwritten journal |
| Task [50 minutes] | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Make a list of things you do when you work with children. 2. Write a short paragraph about each one describing how these do, or do not support the being, belonging and becoming child. Be honest with yourself. 3. If there are things in your list which do not support the being, belonging and becoming child, what will you do differently to change that? |
| Response | <p>In the <i>being, belonging and becoming</i> chat forum share:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • one thing you do which supports being, belong and becoming. • one thing you will do differently in future |
| Feedback | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read what at least three other students have posted • Comment on them in a constructive and sensitive |

way.

- Read comments on your own post.

Conclusion

In this theme, we have provided an overview of the construction of the developmental child. We have highlighted the principles of development and factors that influence development. We provided you with an outline of different development domains but stressed the importance of viewing the child holistically. Thereafter, we presented a brief synopsis of a number of development theorists and highlighted the importance of adopting an eclectic theoretical framework for understanding the developmental child. Although this theme has highlighted the construction of the developmental child, we remind you of Walsh's (2005) saying that *knowledge of development is necessary but not sufficient to ensure quality early childhood education*.

By foregrounding the child as being, belonging and becoming we recognise:

- The belonging child has connections with and makes contributions to the world they inhabit;
- The being child is competent in the present time; and
- The child undergoes a process of dynamic change.

We acknowledge that this way of conceptualising childhood and children requires a paradigm shift which may not be easy. However, we believe that a shift of this kind will allow you to participate in the ongoing debates around quality early childhood education.

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Appendix One

Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems perspective

Bronfenbrenner describes how child development is influenced by a number of environmental (factor's outside the child) and 'people' factors. All children have different experiences which will influence how they develop and learn. These influences may be positive or negative (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 2007). No child develops in isolation.

The environment is seen as a system of circles nested inside each other with the child at the centre (see Figure 6). The circles or systems interact with and influence each other. The interaction between the circles or systems influences the development and learning of the child.

Bronfenbrenner's Model of Child Development

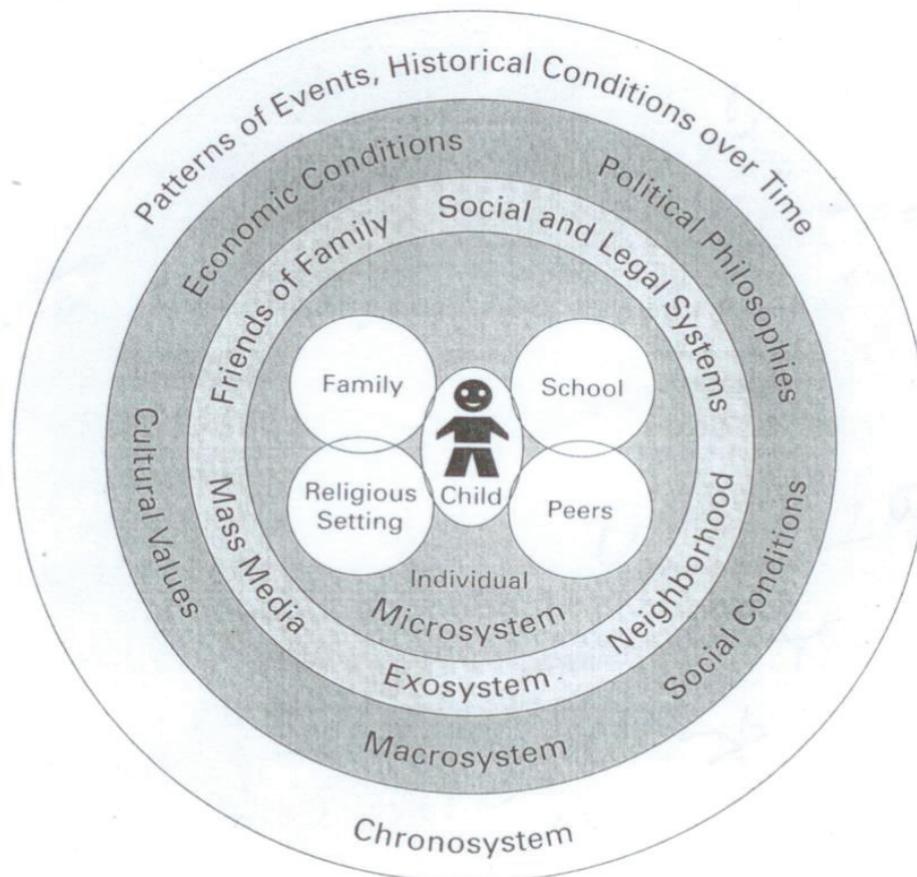


Figure 7 Bronfenbrenner's Model of Child Development (Gordon and Browne, 2008:152)

This is a complex perspective. As you read further you will realise that there are many different factors that impact the wellbeing of individuals, the community in which we live and the broader society.

The microsystem forms the inner circle and is closest to the child. It is the immediate, everyday environment and includes family (including extended family), peers and the ECCE centre, if applicable. An example of a disturbance in the microsystem could be domestic violence. Can you think of any others?

The exosystem surrounds the inner circle and consists of broader environmental factors. These factors include friends of the family, social and mass media, the neighbourhood and local community, as well as certain social and legal systems that impact everyday living. An example of a disruption could be an unsafe neighbourhood. A positive ecosystem could include functional support systems organised by the local community to ensure children are safe.

The macrosystem forms the third circle. These factors are more distant from the child. They include broader-based social and economic conditions such as poverty, cultural values and political philosophies. An example of potential disruption in this system could be changing of policies controlling ECCE settings, or the non-payment of child grant. A functional feeding scheme on the other hand, might help to alleviate the effects of poverty, and ensure parents are less stressed. This may result in a more caring and nurturing relationship with the child. In this example the macrosystem impacts the microsystem and leads to an improved sense of belonging and being.

The outer circle is called the chronosystem and refers to events over time that could be very distant from the child, but which could still have an influence on the child's development. Patterns of events such as a continual influx of immigrants from neighbouring countries and historical conditions over time are examples of this system. A current example within the South African context is ongoing xenophobia (racial intolerance/ dislike of foreigners). Harsh living conditions in other countries, leading to migration, impacting on the macro, eco and microsystems of other communities.

The implications for care, nurturing, teaching and learning

Study Figure 7. You will see that the circle nearest to the child has the most direct influence on the child's life. As a teacher you need to be well informed about all aspects of this inner system in relation to each child in your centre. However, you must also pay close attention to factors in the exosystem and the support that you can access, such as making use of a community library, or your relationship with the local clinic.

Each child develops and learns within a particular, unique environment or context. Bullying or other social difficulties, or home factors based on gender differentiation, such as girls having to do time consuming and tiring household chores, may all impact on the physical, emotional and other 'well-being' elements experienced by the children you teach.

Something to think about:

How well do you know the background or contextual features impacting the life of the children who enter your class? How can you find out more so you begin to understand what is motivating – or holding back – the children in your care. Then you will be able to provide the best learning opportunities for your children.

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Appendix Two

A Cultural-Historical View of Child Development

Introduction

In the cultural-historical approach early childhood education is framed broadly in terms of cultural contexts and not in relation to the individual child reaching standardised age-related norms of development. Rather the focus has shifted to how adults (parents and teachers) interact with children and the types of intersubjectivity (psychological relationships between people) that are being built through a focus on the children's interests and capabilities (Anning et al., 2009). In this extract we examine the need for a new perspective on child development and offer an alternative approach namely a cultural-historical perspective. In addition we explore the implications of this approach for learning.

Why it is necessary to adopt a cultural-historical view of child development

The adoption of a cultural-historical view of child development (also known as a historical-sociocultural view) has been fuelled by the ongoing critique of the developmental view of child development that predominantly emphasises biological imperatives. This developmental view has been “found to be wanting for a range of cultural (Rogoff, 2003; Howes, 2010), social (Qvortrup, Corsaro & Honig, 2009) and even health (Bendelow, 2009; Rogoff, 2011) reasons” (cited in Fler, 2015: 19).

According to Fler (2015) a theoretically robust way of conceptualizing child development (Hedegaard & Fler, 2013) has been missing from these debates. These authors suggest that cultural-historical theory offers a more localised and nuanced understanding of human development. As Hedegaard (2012) argues, it is society which creates the conditions for children's development, thus views of development are based on “traditional (historical lived in the present moment) and contemporary (new cultural technologies) views of children's lived experiences” (Fler, 2015: 19).

By exploring both traditional and contemporary views of child development it is possible to challenge the dominant way that many ECCE practitioners view child development. If we are uncritical we run the risk that all children are viewed in the same way, through the same lens (Howes, 2010). This can easily lead to teachers and parents thinking that children are all the same; they do the same things at more or less the same time. This understanding of child development as universal (common, worldwide) has been called a ‘one size fits all’ approach (Mac Naughton, 2005).

It is becoming increasingly apparent that this one size fits all approach is no longer adequate in explaining the unique development processes of each child. When one observes ECCE settings there are many children who clearly come from different contexts and cultural backgrounds. There are poor children and more affluent children, children whose home language is English and children who speak English as a second or even third or fourth language (Howes, 2010). Within these multicultural contexts Howes (2010) argues that we have to re-examine what we consider to be developmentally appropriate practice (DAP).

Since the nineteen seventies DAP has been strongly advocated throughout most countries that offer ECCE services. In more recent years DAP has also been

critiqued as not providing a sufficient overall insight into young children's growth, development, learning and overall wellbeing (Rogoff, 2003; Sylva, Melhuish, Sammons, Siraj-Blatchford, & Taggart, 2010; Wood, 2009). According to Sylva et al., (2010) ECCE policies and theoretical frameworks privilege certain ways of understanding children against a development continuum, typically conceptualized as stages, norms and milestones, and against curriculum goals, which can serve to position groups and individuals in deficit terms (Wood, 2010:12). As Fler (2015: 22) notes, "many countries [and this includes South Africa] have been colonized by a view of child development that is framed in relation to ages and stages, and where progression is measured against traditional European development (e.g. Piaget) or US benchmarks for developmentally appropriate practice."

Howes (2010) claims that we need to consider our understandings of excellent or worthy practice, as well as be able to adapt our practice to meet cultural expectations of families in our care. We therefore need another way of conceptualizing children's development (Hedegaard & Fler, 2013). Fler (2015) argues the life experiences of children create the conditions for children's development. To support this claim she draws on Vygotsky's historical-cultural theory to provide an alternative lens through which to view child development.

Cultural-historical theory was first described by Vygotsky in the early nineteenth hundreds (Fler, 2015). Vygotsky was in part challenging the dominance of behaviourism which was the prevailing view of child development at the time. He was critical of the relatively fixed age and stage related milestones, which he argued said very little about the child and their competencies, such as learning to walk, talk and so on. Vygotsky also argued that "it is not enough to divide a child's development into periods scientifically. We must also consider its [child development] dynamics and the dynamics of transitions from one age level to another" (cited in Fler, 2015: 22).

A number of theorists including a group known as the neo Vygotskians (Wertsch, del Rio and Alvarez, 1995), position themselves under the term 'sociocultural' because this term reflects how Vygotskian heritage "has been appropriated in contemporary debates in the human sciences, at least in the West" (Wertsch et al. in Daniels, 2001:78).

Socio-cultural theory in brief

Vygotsky's view of culture does not relate specifically to ethnicity, but rather it refers to the cultural development of a child within their specific community. This includes all the nonbiological dimensions that shape children's development, such as the values, practices and customs within a family, community or society. It also refers to the child's ability to impact their social and material (physical) conditions. A cultural-historical conception of child development also includes the historically formed practices that are valued by a community. For example, language, dress, forms of literacy acquired through schooling, or family specific values such as manners, and eating practices (e.g. eating with hands, chop sticks, forks) (Fler, 2015).

Vygotsky situated the process of learning and development in the sociocultural environment (Aljaksandr et al., 2003). Vygotsky's view of child development is characterized as a process of unity (coming together) between the material (physical) and mental (thinking). This unity helps children make meaning (Aljaksandr et al., 2003). This process takes place as children participate in day to day activities

at home, in preschool, and in their community (Hedegaard & Fler, 2013). Vygotsky did not negate development milestones; but he strongly suggested that social aspects of the child's life critical for optimal development to take place (Fler, 2015). For example, a child is labelled as being difficult. Instead of identifying development factors as the only cause for disruptive behaviour, Vygotsky maintained that there if there is a breakdown of relationships between the child and the adult, the problem is not (only) with the development of the child but also with the social relations in which the child is participating at that time.

Vygotsky acknowledged that there are "critical moments" (Fler, 2015: 24), or 'dynamic crises', such as a transition like going to school, which might trigger episodes of problematic behaviour. These critical points are seen as potential indicators of the progression of the child's development.

Vygotsky (1998) argued that supporting child development requires a balancing act between these unremarkable everyday events and dynamic crises so they do not become contested spaces for power relations between parents and children (Grieshaber, 2004).

According to Fler (2015) Vygotsky highlighted a number of essential factors which inform child development and allow a culturally responsive view of development. These include:

- the social situation of development
- the relations between ideal and real form
- the concepts of motives and leading activity

Social Situation of Development

This concept captures the unity between the child and their social and material environment. It helps to explain how children experience the same situation differently. Vygotsky called these differences children's motivation orientation – or what motivates the children to engage with the activity. Fler (2015) provides a very explicit example explaining the social situation of development. Read this example on pages 24-27 of the article.

The Relations between Ideal and Real form

Fler (2015) maintains that If a community is asked what the ideal form of development is, in most cases it will not reflect conventional western understandings of development, such as Piaget's stages of development or benchmarking children's progress against US developmental frameworks. The ideal forms of development will be centred on what each particular community deems to be important.

Another important idea is the connection between the child's current form of development and the ideal form of development. Fler (2015) uses learning to talk as an example - the relation between the ideal (language of the child's culture) and real form (what is possible for that child at that moment) of a child's development. In order to learn to talk, children must be in a rich language environment specific to their society. Infants are not expected to begin speaking in an ideal form, but are surrounded by people who engage them meaningfully in social situations where the ideal form of language is available to them. Having the ideal form of language in the

child's environment allows the development of language that is valued and needed to successfully participate in a particular community.

Teachers are encouraged to observe what each child brings to a particular situation and how each child experiences the situation differently. There is a nuanced (subtle) shift from focusing on age and stage development, to a focus on context.

A cultural-historical view of child development acknowledges that what is valued by families and the community at large must be available in the child's social and material environment. Acknowledging the ideal and real form of a child's development must be part of pedagogical practice.

Leading Activity and Motive Orientation

Vygotsky suggested that play was the leading activity of preschool children. According to Karpov (2005) socio-dramatic play is a lead activity for children between 3-6 years, and is a motivational element. It is through play, specifically socio dramatic play, that children develop self-regulatory behaviours. These are behaviours that children need in order to learn about their social world, to interact successfully in social spaces, and to achieve success in formal schooling. From a Vygotskian perspective "leading activities with their central motive are always conceptualised as the relations between the child and the society within which they live" (Fleer 2015:29). Children enjoy playing and interacting with each other and therefore play leads to motive orientation. From a development perspective progression (i.e. advancement in development) occurs when a child's motives change, such as when children's attention is focused more on learning than play.

Socio-cultural theory and learning

For Vygotsky (1978) learning is the collaborative construction of knowledge through the mediation of psychological tools. These tools are "symbolic cultural artefacts...most fundamentally language — that enable us to master psychological functions like memory, perception, and attention in ways appropriate to our cultures" (Kozulin, 1998:1). In sociocultural-historical mediation is underpinned by the notion of co-construction. As Wood (2009:29) asserts:

Mediation is the guidance, support and collaboration with others to solve a problem.

Mediation is the use of, for example, language (a psychological tool) to bring about qualitative changes in thinking

Indicators of effective [preschool] pedagogy include opportunities for co-construction between children and adults, including 'sustained shared thinking', joint involvement in child- and adult-initiated activities and informed interactions in children's self-initiated and free-play activities. The practitioner's role is conceptualised as proactive in creating play/learning environments, as well as being responsive to children's choices, interests and patterns of learning.

This quote effectively sums up the three concepts previously described, namely the social situation of development; the relations between ideal and real form; and the concepts of motives and leading activity.

The adoption of cultural historical theory calls for new ways of thinking about learning and pedagogy; about the nature of knowledge; about assessment and evaluation; and about what constitutes quality in the early years. Anning et al. (2009) argue that

we need to rethink the role of adults, “particularly their knowledge base and their capacity for sustained shared thinking” (Fleer, Anning & Cullen 2009:188) because children are increasingly being recognised as powerful players in their own learning. They are viewed as capable, competent and unique human beings who are able to make and co-construct meaning together with responsive adults, such as the teacher, as well as their peers.

Co-construction of meaning and understanding require that teachers become aware of what children know, what they are thinking and understanding. Teachers also need to learn to share and develop their own thinking about the topic. “Co-construction requires that teachers are willing to find out more about content knowledge as well as develop excellent dialogue skills” (Jordan, 2009:43). And adults have to actively acknowledge children’s cultural contexts.

Wood’s (2009) suggests that the cultural-historical approach places a greater emphasis on the role of the adult in planning for play. In a cultural-historical approach, learning through play is not by accident. She comments:

Play is sustained through reciprocal and responsive relationships, and is situated in activities that are socially constructed and mediated. While children’s interests remain central to curriculum planning the subject disciplines enrich and extend the children’s learning (p.27).

As Podmore, (2009) notes, teachers need to make the transition from a constructivist development perspective to a historical-sociocultural perspective. This means teachers have to think differently about children, about the type of programme they offer children, and about working with families and assessment.

Conclusion

Cultural-historical theory suggests that we view the process of child development in a broader way that considers a multitude of factors. Conceptualising child development in this way will result in a qualitative change in how we construct the child and the child’s development. Cultural-historical theory is a system of concepts: the social situation of development, leading activity of play and learning in relation to motives, and the relations between the ideal and real form of development.

These concepts are tools for understanding the process of a child’s development. The content of that development must be localized and specific to the community in which the child is living, learning and developing.

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Appendix Three

Economic human capital discourse

The work of James Heckman (2006) has shown how early learning is a good investment for countries because it provides the foundation for later learning. Heckman (2006) argues that money invested in early childhood programmes generates a higher return on investment than the same investment in formal schooling. But if early childhood education is to yield appropriate child outcomes and longer term social and economic benefits, it needs to be of a sufficient quality (OECD, 2011).

The economic human capital discourse is based on the premise that if there is quality early intervention, education and employment outcomes would improve, social problems would diminish and ‘survival in the global race will be assured’ (Moss, 2019: 11). Human capital theory, thus suggests that the early years offer the best time to invest in education. Governments and parents make these choices on behalf of children by funding early childhood education. The assumption is that in later years both the children and society will reap the rewards from this investment in human capital (young children).

The influence of the human capital discourse is evident in terms and concepts which are used in policy documentation and by teachers. Such terms include desirable learning outcomes, benchmarking, standards, school readiness, early intervention, quality indicators and best practice (Dahlberg and Moss, 2005; Cannella, 2010) and (perhaps unintentionally) promote a more prescriptive approach to early childhood education. This is ironic as the very notions of quality and best practice seek to offer excellent age-appropriate early learning experiences to young children, which we know are play-based.

Governments need to ensure a measurable return on investment and consequently early childhood programmes and services become more prescriptive and negate the very quality they espouse to achieve. This more narrowly defined standard of what constitutes quality has been responsible for the schoolification of early childhood education services and has allowed formal schooling to outmanoeuvre early education and care (Moss, 2013). In addition, this shift towards more prescriptive learning programmes has marginalised play-based pedagogies.

It is a complex scenario. On the one hand, economic human capital theory has demonstrated and supported the importance of quality early childhood services. On the other hand to ensure quality, services have shifted towards a more technical and prescriptive programme which negates the holistic construction of being, belonging and becoming.

It is evident that the ECCE teacher has an important responsibility to ensure that young children receive excellent early learning experiences (which are play-based and not too prescriptive) thereby also ensuring that ongoing investment in early childhood education is worthwhile. To achieve this, ECCE teachers must have deep insight into their pedagogical practices and understand what constitutes good play-based learning. We will briefly explore the implications for practice in the next section.

Rights-based discourse

The rights-based discourse is derived from the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNICEF, 1989). The UN Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC) is premised on the survival, development, promotion and participation rights of young children. This discourse views children as active citizens with the right to participate and voice their views, wants and needs; and the right to be nurtured, cared for and educated (Woodhead, 1999; Dahlberg & Moss, 2005; Clark, 2017).

In 1995, South Africa ratified the CRC and in 1999 the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child was endorsed. The CRC and the African Charter see the right to education as beginning from birth and closely linked to children's growth and development in the African context. The call is for governments to ensure that young children have access to care and education designed to promote children's well-being and their right to optimum development (Martin, 2015; Meier, 2014). Children's rights to adequate and quality ECD services are also found in the South African Constitution and the Bill of Rights (RSA, 1996). Furthermore, the Children's Act (No 38 of 2005) addresses the concerns for the care, education and protection of young children (RSA, 2007).

Rights-based discourse has gradually started to be acknowledged in policy documents, has entered the vocabulary of early childhood teachers and has been explicitly articulated in some curricula frameworks and practices (Department of Basic Education, 2009, 2015). The rights-based discourse corresponds with views of sociocultural theories by addressing ethics, inclusion, diversity and social justice.

Appendix Four

Relationships and connectedness

Relationships are considered central to human existence. Young children experience their world as an environment of relationships and connectedness that affect all development domains (see Theme 3). The infant's brain is wired to be in relationships that are responsive to their needs and interests. The infant grows and develops within these nurturing, responsive and supportive relationships. The nature of these early relationships sets the foundation for later learning, relationships and development. In early childhood settings, relationships and connectedness with children and parents contribute to and support children's healthy development and learning.

Identity

Identity explores the answer to the question, *Who are you?* It includes the qualities, beliefs, personality, looks and expressions that make a person who they are. Identity construction is continuous and dynamic in nature. Construction of identity begins in infancy with the active participation of individuals in the child's social world. There are several types of identities: personal, social, cultural, racial, ethnic, gender, sexual, peer, group, etc.

Personal, social and emotional well-being

According to Barblett and Maloney (2010: 14) explaining the construct of well-being in the early years of life 'differs across domains of health, psychology, mental health and education.' Well-being includes good mental and physical health and feelings of happiness and satisfaction. Relationships are central to the development of well-being and emphasise the importance of secure, predictable and loving attachments from infancy onwards. Well-being manifests itself in terms of internal and external behaviours such as self-confidence, resilience, trust, humour, happiness and satisfaction. If children are immersed in responsive, caring environments as they grow, they increasingly develop self-regulation and positive emotional and social skills.

Voice participation and agency

Children's participation, voice and agency constitute important concepts in the construction of childhood and children. They are the means through which children's rights are recognised. These rights are endorsed in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The terms participation, voice and agency are sometimes used interchangeably but meanings might differ in different situations and contexts. The concept of participation has evolved from the emphasis placed upon listening to young children. This understanding of participation acknowledges the child as an expert in matters affecting their lives and able to participate meaningfully in their everyday lives. Voice refers to the child's right to express their views freely and to have their views listened to. Children's agency implies activity. Children are given the space to translate their views into actions such as making decisions, making choices, influencing the environment, displaying self-regulation and concrete expression.

Agency refers to children who have the opportunity to express their opinions and choices in family and other decision-making situations.

Inclusivity and diversity

Diversity recognises difference in terms of age, race, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion, disability, home language, religion, education, etc. It's about empowering people by appreciating and respecting difference. In a globalised, interdependent world, it is essential that children learn to respect and appreciate individuals regardless of difference (Siraj-Blatchford, 2014). Respect for diversity requires inclusionary practices of conscious thought, effort and action. In early childhood, **inclusion** acknowledges the rights of every child, parent and teacher to 'access and participate in high quality early childhood settings. In these settings diversity is accepted: in fact it is welcomed and viewed as a rich resource and not a problem' (Owen, 2016). Creating an inclusive culture where children are respected and valued, regardless of their diversity, is about the creation of a sense of being and belonging in an early childhood space.