

Socio cultural factors in child development education essay



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Children are the future of every nation and people have always strived for helping them to reach the most of their potential in the life span. Today's children have more complex needs which should be fulfilled for their proper level of development. In this work we will try to overview three well-known theories of child development and analyze the similarities and differences between them, as it is very topical to know already existing theories to evaluate properly modern approaches to child education; and find out the essence of interaction of cognitive, physical and emotional development of children to realize the importance of knowing o their needs.

Lev Vygotsky focused on the socio-cultural factors in child development which he considered the most valuable. He stated that most of knowledge which every child gets in the course of his development is provided by a wise and experienced tutor (mostly parent or teacher). The tutor provides the child with both verbal and nonverbal instructions which the child is meant to follow. And natural curiosity of the child helps him to do this. Vygotsky believed that higher mental processes in the individual have their origin in social processes.[1]Moreover Vygotsky maintained that that social learning had a tendency of preceding development. Vygotsky was sure that “ learning was a necessary and universal aspect of the process of developing culturally organized, specifically human psychological function”.[2]

Also Vygotsky developed a system of higher mental functions. These functions are developed from the cultural tool, which are got by children unconsciously, in the process of getting the cultural, historical and other information through the verbal and nonverbal interaction with a tutor. In the

process of development children learn how to use these cultural tools. Higher mental functions include: attention, verbal thinking and memory.

It is interesting that among all the mental tools Lev Vygotsky considered language as the most specific and important one. On the one hand it is a necessary mean to provide children with verbal instructions, while on the other hand it serves as an effective means for intellectual adaptation of a child. “ Private speech” according to Vygotsy’s theory helps children to make needed strategies to their activities[3]. Thus, language is nothing else, but a boost for thinking and understanding.

Jean Piaget

Jean Piaget’s theory of child development is cognitive and is based on the system of stages of cognitive development of a child. Following this system we may recognize such stages as:

Sensorimotor stage (0 -2 years). At this stage children investigate the environment around them with the help of their sense. They also start learning how to master the things around them. For example, they get to know that if to throw an object it will fall and make some kind of noise.

During this stage children realize that even if the object is not near them it still doesn’t stop existing.

Preoperational stage (2 – 7 years). This stage is mainly characterized by children’s inability to see things from the different point of view, but their own one – they are very ego-centric. At this stage children learn how to use language to describe objects in the world.

Concrete operational stage (7-11). During this stage children can already think logically and predict the sequence of their actions. They also can classify objects into several categories.

Formal operational stage (11+ years). At this stage children may think abstractly and can plan their actions through hypothesis. Moreover they are deeply concerned about the future.

The key concept of the developmental theory of Jean Piaget is that nature is dominant over nurture.[4]Out of his system of stages of cognitive development of children we see that the first stage is sensorimotor one. At this stage “ the infant’s movements, physical and intellectual lack precision and his activities and attention are dominated by external stimulation”[5]Piaget underlines that the initial instincts - including the influence of sight, taste, touch, and hearing- of people are the most powerful and it is they which make their personalities on the whole.

Jean Piaget believes that children are no less intellectual than adults, but they think differently. From the very moment of birth of each child he has to do a lot of things: to understand how people interact and how the whole world works, therefore we suppose that they are less mentally powerful. Indeed, children have more intricate brain abilities than adults, so if to take this suggestion as a starting point it is possible to overestimate our methods of teaching and educating.

Arnold Gesell

The maturational theory of Arnold Gesell, which is characterized by biological perspective, is based on the belief that every child has a specific plan or programme within his body as for his development. Gesell was convinced that heredity or nature has a primary influence on the development of a child.

Gesell is known for establishing certain norms for children at every stage of their growth and developed the so-called “ gradients of growth”. Among them we may find: motor characteristics, personal hygiene, fears, emotional expression, play, school life, ethics, and philosophic outlook[6].

Gesell believed that the development of the child through either education or play should be spontaneous. He suggested that through the course of evolution children inherited some kind of code which prescribed their actions and needs, so if a parent wants to help his child o find his life path the most effective way would be to let the child choose it himself.

The key similarity in the developmental theories of Jean Piaget and Arnold Gesell lies in their belief in the dominance of nature over nurture[7]. Both theorists also developed original systems of measuring either the stages of child development or the indicators of their growth. Moreover it is needed to point out that all the three theories are promoting effective interaction of tutors and children in the process of their development although according to each of the theories their work is differently directed.

Unlike Vygotsky’s thought that social learning should obviously precede the development Piaget considered that learning was less important thing in the child development – the main influence instead he saw in nature. Also it is <https://assignbuster.com/socio-cultural-factors-in-child-development-education-essay/>

necessary to mention that Vygotsky paid much more attention to the socio-cultural factors in child development than other theorists[8]. Although the theories of Gesell and Piaget are alike in many aspects, the difference is that Piaget underlined the major influence of sensorimotor stage on child development while Gesell believed much in heredity, i. e. Piaget maintained that the child cannot enter the next stage until he fulfills the previous one, while Gesell was sure that child would be whom he ought to be due to the biological scheme within his body.

Analyzing the theories of child development makes us ponder over importance of effective interaction of cognitive, physical and emotional interaction in the process of development of children. In the matter of fact unless all these aspects are properly accomplished the child has fewer chances to realize him or her in life as it is needed. Cognitive development refers to memory, concentration, attention and imagination[9]. It helps children to do well at school, dream, pretend what they will be in future, model different life situations, understand and use symbols, count and even write compositions. On the whole cognitive development is necessary for a child to solve their problems at every stage of their development. Proper physical development is responsible for children's coordination, motor abilities and other physical skills. Emotional development helps children to possess such traits as self-regulation, self-sufficiency, self-concept and proper self-esteem[10]. If only the previous aspects of development are in proper level child has chances to make a positive and healthy self-image. The main point is that poor physical development may influence badly the level of attention or even memory of a child which would certainly lead to

problems at school and thus to under-self-estimation. And vice versa: if a child is poorly developed emotionally he may be passive and ignorant which will lead to poor physical and cognitive development[11]. Therefore interaction of physical, emotional and cognitive development is of primary importance both for tutors and children.

Evidently knowing the principles of forming of the child's personality is of great importance both for parents, teachers and psychologists. Unless we know the needs of the child or an adolescent at the particularly stage of his development we will hardly be able to help him. Knowing the key milestones of the development at child's age group it is possible to evaluate his or her physical, cognitive and emotional development and find the best way for every concrete child to improve each aspect. It is far more important nowadays, when children have access to the media, computers and Internet and can themselves find all the answers(as it seems to them) to their questions, so they seldom ask their tutors how to solve their problems - instead they make decisions by themselves, often not the most reasonable ones. In such situations it is particularly valuable to be aware of the peculiarities of development of children at this age and what problems most of them usually face. It goes without saying that knowing norms of children and adolescents will help to find adequate advice to promote children to reach their potential in life.

All the three theories of child development proved to be reasonable and useful. We found out that Lev Vygotsky's theory was based primarily on socio-cultural factors of development. The theorist believed that learning preceded development and that made the main difference between his <https://assignbuster.com/socio-cultural-factors-in-child-development-education-essay/>

theory and the theory of Jean Piaget who was sure that the child's potential depended on the development of his senses and instincts first of all. Another prominent theorist Arnold Gesell was sure that nature dominated over nurture too and his key concept was that heredity was absolutely responsible for the development of particular child. Gesell and Piaget even developed their own systems of evaluating of either the stages of child development or the indicators of their growth. Although the theories differ in many aspects, every of them is directed on effective interaction between tutors and children and that is the key value of every of them. It is important to be able to realize the needs of children and adolescents to help them in reaching their potential. In this process it is necessary to each a well-organized interaction between cognitive, physical and emotional development of children.