Exploring Children's Developmental Stages and Preparation of a Framework for Comprehensive and Creative Curriculum

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Abstract:

This paper examines the overall child development and approaches to child development and suggested a framework for constructing a curriculum that enhance the whole child learning process relevance to learning theories. In addition to assess the child activities in and out of the classroom and school. It has been examined from the developmental approaches of child that it is essential to concern the theories and approaches to child development for making a framework of creative and comprehensive curriculum. The theories and approaches of Jean Piaget, Bruner, Erikson and Hoffnung have discussed in the paper. Generally three major domains of development (Physical, cognitive, and psychosocial) are discussed in relevance to above mentioned psychologists. Concerning upon the stages and development of child a framework for comprehensive curriculum has made. Furthermore, the paper suggested the construction of Child-centered curriculum. In construction of the curriculum, the content and material required for comprehensive curriculum has been added in the paper. The very first thing is to make it research and theories based, a good curriculum must have specific goals and objectives, the interest level of children should be observed first and include materials afterword, the role of the teacher, family engagement and concerning the disable children are the main considerations of comprehensive and creative curriculum.

Keywords: *Child, developmental stages, framework, comprehensive curriculum.*

Introduction

Understanding the stages of child development and the approaches to child development is essential for designing best learning curriculum. As administrator of the school or an educator of children, you will be concerned with how children learn and how you can optimize this learning for each individual in your classroom.

As you gain an understanding of the domains of development, (physical, cognitive and psychosocial) and their relevance to various stages of the lifecycle of the child (early and middle childhood, adolescence), you will see how important it is to be aware of the signs of development, as this can assist you in planning and delivering developmentally appropriate lessons.

In addition, an understanding of some theories and approaches of development and their relevance to learning, and knowledge of a range of approaches to learning that enhance development, will also assist in teaching primary school children most effectively. Gaining knowledge about child development will enable you to set a creative and comprehensive curriculum.

Many theories exist upon lifecycle and the developmental stages of child. The theories also suggested different approaches to child learning. This assignment examined the approaches and domains of development of child that link to relevant stages of the lifespan (early and middle childhood, adolescence), then developmental theories to suggest a framework for child-centered, creative and compressive curriculum.

Approaches, Stages, and Domains of Child Development

Well-known psychologists Jean Piaget (1896-1980, Erikson (1902) and Bruner (1915-2009) have introduced the theories of child development. Generally, they have talked about three main domains of child development (Physical, cognitive and psychosocial). However, some authors separate these domains into more explicit areas of development. For example, Papilla et al. (2009) use eight domain areas – physical, neurological, cognitive, language, emotional, social, self/gender/identity and moral, while Peterson (2010) uses seven domains to describe developmental changes – physical, neurobiological, sensorimotor, cognitive, social, and emotional and personality.

On the other hand, Vygotsky expanded on social and cultural constructivism for child learning. Tolman's also explored the environment impact on learning. He said environment has strong influence on child learning and development. Children learn from the environment he says.

Jean Piaget and Child Development

Jean Piaget was the first psychologist to make a systematic study of child development. He explained how a child development get changes. He says "Development is biologically based and changes as the child matures. Cognition therefore develops in all children in the same sequence of stages". Each child goes through the stages in the same order, and no stage can be missed out - although some individuals may never attain the later stages. He described four stages of development.

- Sensorimotor (0 to 2 years)

- Preoperational (2 to 7 years)

- concrete operational (7 to 11 years)
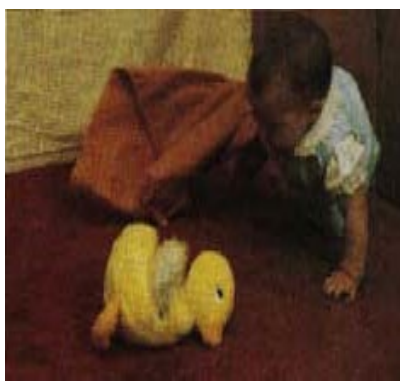
- formal operational (11 years and above)

Figure 1. Stages of Child Development

1. In first stage a development a child has sensorimotor skills. The key feature of this stage is object performance. Objects and events can be mentally represented by a child. In this stage, the kids mostly learn from trial and error learning. For example, if you place a toy under a blanket, the child who has achieved object permanence knows it is there and can actively seek it. Before this stage, the child behaves as if the toy had simply disappeared. The attainment of object permanence generally signals the transition to the next stage.

2. In the second stage the development of symbolic thought becomes in child. In this stage the child begins to use language and mental images and attempts to generalize in illogical ways.

Figure 2. Child's Symbolic Stage

3. The third stage Piaget called **concert operational stage** of child development. During this time, children gain a better understanding of mental operations. The child will begin to think logically about concrete events, but have difficulty understanding abstract or hypothetical concepts.

4. The last stage of development in child is **Formal operational stage** according to Piaget and it occurs between the ages of 11-25. There is a large difference between a child that is 3 and a child in the Formal Operational stage has different approaches and ideas when faced with real life concepts. Such as biology in living things and what are nonliving, inanimate objects. A child can think of an abstract situation when they are in the Formal Operations, rather than focus on only the concrete evidence given. They can analyse and determine questions.

Piaget interpreted and defined intelligence in a practical way. He interpreted intelligence in terms of an individual's adjustment. His theory has also highlighted the importance of drives and motivation in the field of learning and motivation. Piaget's theory provides valuable information and advice on curriculum planning and structuring the schemes of studies. The knowledge of Piaget's theory may prove quite valuable to teachers and parents for making them aware of the thought process of the children at a particular level of maturation or chronological age.

Jerome Seymour Bruner and Child Development

Like Piaget, Bruner believed that children have an innate capacity that helps them make sense of the work and that cognitive abilities develop through active interaction. Unlike Piaget however, Bruner argued that social factors, particularly language, were important for cognitive growth. He introduced a Scaffolding Theory, Spiral Curriculum and discovery learning for child. He recommended the following point to remember by educators and instructors.

• The role of the teacher should not be to teach information by rote learning but to facilitate the learning process.

• A good teacher designs lessons that can help students discover the relationship between bits of information.

Erik Erikson and Child Development

Erik Erikson is the father of psychosocial development. His theory integrates personal, emotional and social development that's why the theory called psychosocial development theory. He says "Children love and want to be loved and they very much prefer the joy of accomplishment to the achievement of hateful failure. Do not mistake a child for his symptoms"

Erikson argued that development proceeds in stages, each stage is characterized by a psychosocial challenge or crises. He gave 8 stages of child development. Each stage reflects motivation of the individual.

Age (Years)	Stage	Psychosocial Crisis	Psychosocial Strength	Environmental Influence
1	Infancy	Trust vs. Mistrust	Hope	Maternal
2-3	Early childhood	Autonomy vs. Shame and Doubt	Willpower	Both parents or adult substitutes
4-5	Preschool	Initiative vs. Guilt	Purpose	Parents, family and friends
6-11	Middle Childhood	Industry vs. Inferiority	Competence	School
12-18	Adolescence	Identity vs. Role confusion	Fidelity	Peers
18-35	Young adulthood	Intimacy vs. Isolation	Love	Spouse, lover, friends
35-65	Middle age	Generativity vs. Stagnation	Care	Family, society
Over 65	Old age	Integrity vs. Despair	Wisdom	All humans

Figure 1. Erikson's Psychosocial Development
Source: Advance Educational Psychology

Erikson creates brain development curriculum. In the first months and years of life, a child's brain is busy building the foundation for future growth and learning. Erikson has created a kit of curriculum modules to channel this important knowledge into college child development classroom.

After examining the different theories and approaches of child development, I found that a well creative, comprehensive and child-centred curriculum should consider the three core domains (Physical, cognitive and psychosocial development).

Physical domain is a biological change includes changes in the body itself and how a person uses their body, brain, sensory capacities, motor skills and health (Hoffnung, 2010), (Atifnigar et al., 2021, 2022a, 2022b; Atifnigar, Alokozay, et al., 2020; Atifnigar, Alokozay, Wahidullah, Zaheer, et al., 2020; Atifnigar, Hasanzoy, et al., 2020; Atifnigar, Zaheer, et al., 2020; Atifnigar & Alokozay, 2020; Zaheer, Alokozay & Atifnigar, 2020).

On the other hand, Hoffnung (2010) defined cognitive domain as "cognitive domain involves changes in methods and styles of thinking, language ability and language use and strategies for remembering and recalling information". And it is comprised of learning, attention, memory, language, thinking, reasoning and creativity.

The psychosocial domain of child's development is "about changes in feelings or emotions as well as changes in relations with other people" (Hoffnung, 2010).

Link to these three core domain Hoffnung has selected key milestones of development. Shortly the milestones of development are indicated on the table below for physical, cognitive and psychosocial domains for students aged between 2 and 18 years.

STAGE/AGE	DOMAIN		
	PHYSICAL	COGNITIVE	PSYCHOSOCIAL
Early childhood (ages 2–5)	• Climbs stairs • First throw of a ball • Creates simple drawings • Is learning to write • Dresses self with help	• Vocabulary grows • Enjoys dramatic play • Understands symbols • Understands fractional qualities	• Selects preferred playmates • Develops gender-role awareness • Develops racial awareness
Middle childhood (ages 6–12)	• Runs skilfully • Is able to throw objects at targets • Special skills (e.g. riding a bicycle)	• Solves problems • Is able to read • Is able to write • Develops memory	• Forms friendships • Prefers being with own gender
Adolescence (ages 12–18)	• Undergoes puberty • Experiences growth spurts	• Demonstrates some abstract thinking • Develops adult-like interests	• Develops interest in sexual relationships (for most) • Develops interest in dating (for some) • Obtains first job

Figure 4. Developmental Stages of a Child and their Domains
Source: Advance Educational Psychology

Framework for Creative and Comprehensive Child-centered Curriculum

Based on the concerns of the approaches and theories, a curriculum has to focus on the development of whole child. This assignment is suggesting a framework for designing a creative, comprehensive and child centered curriculum in retrospect to the above theories and approaches of child development.

Comprehensive and creative curriculum is more than a resource guide that contains ideas and activities to do with children in your classrooms or homes. It should be design due to child interests. When a curriculum takes cares of child interest it becomes child centered curriculum.

1. A creative and comprehensive curriculum should first know for the children different skills and building upon those skills. Make sure a curriculum is interested to children.

2. It should be such a framework that to identify learning goals for children, concepts and skills to be thought, teaching strategies and instructional methods.

3. It should have all activities and routines and inform all aspects of early learning programs such as: environmental design, tutorials, schedule, assessment, and program evaluation.

4. It should focus on the development of the whole child, cognitively, physically, linguistically, socially, and emotionally.

5. The Creative Curriculum for Early Childhood describes and demonstrates how to plan a developmentally appropriate program focusing on well-organized interest areas of the children.

6. A creative curriculum underlying philosophy draws from Jean Piaget's work on cognitive

development, Erik Erikson's stages of psychosocial development, and accepted theories mentioned above of how children learn best.

Construction and Content of Creative and Comprehensive Child-Centered Curriculum

1. Consideration of Theories and Research

First and for most important part of framing a creative and comprehensive curriculum is to be based upon learning theories and researches. The theories and research behind the creative and comprehensive curriculum are based on the theories and research that inform decision-making in the early childhood field-the work of Piaget, Bruner, Maslow, Erikson, Smilansky,Vygotsky, and Gardner.

2. Goals and Objectives

Every Curriculum must have a specific goals and objective before designing. Goals tell us the intent of activities. They are designed to allow for individualization to support meeting each child's needs and interests and should be developed to help children learn and develop in all of the different domains such as social emotional, physical, literacy and cognitive. In fact, many activities will help children's skills grow in different goals at the same time.

3. The Role of Administration in Curriculum

Administrators should create such environment of the school and classroom that makes it possible for teachers to teach and children to learn. In order to design a child-centered curriculum, the administrators should create an environment where children feel safe, can make decisions and are allowed to explore, experiment and assert themselves in socially acceptable ways.

4. What should Children Learn?

The curriculum should include the body of knowledge of national and state standard and research reports for six content areas-literacy, math, science, social studies, the arts, and technology-and the process skills children use to learn that content.

5. The Role of Teacher

The role of teacher in creative curriculum is to interact with children in interest areas of the child. On the other hand, in comprehensive curriculum teachers must understand how children learn and design learning environments that complement children's learning needs. The curriculum should also guide teachers' thinking about their own intentional role and include ways in which they can purposefully provide materials, ask questions or design the environment to help children learn through play and investigation.

6. The Role of the Family

In child better learning, there should be a good partnership of both school and families of children. They should focus together in child learning. The curriculum should assign tasks for both school and home assessment. They should work together to support children's best development and learning. The curriculum should include ways in which families share in children's individualized goal-development, provide information about their progress, or participate in classroom experiences.

7. Inclusion, Disabilities, and Diversity

To make a curriculum comprehensive and child-cantered, there should be activities planned for child with disabilities. The environment should be inclusively prepared for children. The curriculum should provide information on ways to provide experiences that reflect the cultures and backgrounds of the children within the early learning site.

Content and Material for Comprehensive, Child-centered Curriculum

1. **Domains to be Consider**

- Psycho-social

- Physical

- Cognitive

2. **Content Areas**

- Literacy
- Math
- Science
- Social Studies
- The Arts
- Technology

3. Interest Areas of Pupils in Classroom and School

- Physical activities
- Blocks
- Dramatic Play
- Toys and Games
- Art
- Library
- Discovery
- Sand and Water
- Music and Movement
- Cooking
- Computers
- Outdoors

Conclusion

This paper mainly talked about the overall child development, approaches to child development and suggested a framework for constructing a curriculum that enhance the whole child learning process relevance to learning theories. In addition to assess the child activities in and out of the classroom and school. It has been examined from the developmental approaches of child that it is essential to concern the theories and approaches to child development for making a framework of creative and comprehensive curriculum. A comprehensive curriculum includes all of the elements and points mentioned above. Comprehensive and creative curriculum is more than a resource guide that contains ideas and activities to do with children in your classrooms or homes. It should be design due to child interests. When a curriculum takes cares of child interest it becomes child centered curriculum.

Furthermore, the construction of Child-centered curriculum has introduced. In construction of the curriculum first thing is to make it research and theories based, a good curriculum must have specific goals and objectives, the interest level of children should be observed first and include materials afterword, the role of the teacher, family engagement and concerning the disable children are the main considerations of comprehensive and creative curriculum.

Finally, the full content of the comprehensive curriculum and the things need to be included in the content are discussed individually.

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