

Handbooklet

Terms and definitions of Child Development



INTRODUCTION

Eastside Community Child Care and Child Development:

Scientific Child Development is our goal. This is not to be confused with abstract intellectual arguments. It is simply a matter of summarizing our work with children to know more fully how best to develop children. ESCC has learned many things from a long process of summarizing our experience with children. This handbooklet shares some of what we have learned, but it is only a starting point. Understanding Child Development is a continuous process in the everyday activity of raising children.

1. CHILD DEVELOPMENT IS HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

In general, this means that Child Development is a mechanism of transferring human experience to the new generation so they can build on the past. Social development has proceeded from primitive times to the current stage of development.

In particular, children reflect the conditions they grow up in and the personality traits of their parents. Children at first imitate, then consolidate from their parents: (a) specific methods of solving problems which face them; and (b) codes of conduct to guide social interaction.

2. THE PRINCIPAL INFLUENCE AND THE NON-PRINCIPAL INFLUENCE

Children learn different things from each parent. Consistently, we have found one parent is the Principal Influence (PI), and one parent is the Non-Principal Influence (Non-PI) on the child's development. It is from the PI that the child learns his/her basic approach to the world, to objects, to people's ideas, to problems. The PI passes on to the child what will be useful to him/her in life. From the PI, the child will learn what methods to use to solve problems; for example, how to ask for help or when to use force, how to get a tool; and even such methods as getting mad or giving up. This is the child's KNOWLEDGE FORM (see definition below).

From the Non-PI, the child learns codes of conduct such as 'Be Polite', or 'Don't Let Others Take Advantage of You', or 'Help Others Who Are Weaker Than You', or 'Never Admit Mistakes'. This is the child's Social Form. To Note: If there is only one parent, the child will adopt his/her Social Form from the PI.

3. KNOWLEDGE FORM

The Knowledge Form is the product of the identity between the child and his/her PI. It is, you might say, the set of operating principles which the child (and the adult PI) uses to negotiate his/her way in the world. It is the Knowledge Form that will determine how a child will respond to a problem, crisis, event or process. For instance, if the doorknob is too high for a child who wants to go outside, what will he/she do? What will be his/her guide to action?

Children's thinking or actions will reflect one of two Knowledge Forms, IDEALIST or REALIST. Some of the traits of each are:

IDEALIST

Physically cautious
Connect to others and
situations

Tries to learn concepts
Takes things personally
Persistent
Easy going

Prefers company of others
Verbalizes feelings

REALIST

Daring or careless
Disconnect from people,
loses train of thought

Learns to work with hands
Blames things on others
Jumps from thing to thing
Works hard, especially at
material work

Go off on his/her own
Keeps feelings to self; or
out of touch with own feelings

To proceed with the example of the child trying to reach the doorknob, the Realist child would be more likely to bring over a chair to climb up on, whereas the Idealist would be more apt to ask someone for help. On the other hand, a Realist will often attempt to do a task beyond him/herself, such as carry too heavy a load, preferring to do it him/herself to asking for help.

4. FORMS OF MOTION

In the world and the universe, nothing is at rest. The concept of motion in matter applies to the tiny molecules of objects as well as to people and society in general. Knowledge Forms in particular are associated with certain forms of motion. Some examples are Action-Reaction, Progression-Regression, Positive-Negative.

Action-Reaction is associated with the Realist Knowledge Form. Realists are more able to see the external -- matter in motion -- but have difficulty connecting with the internal -- motion in matter. For example, in toilet training, a Realist has accidents because he/she isn't aware of the internal signals that he/she had to go.

Idealists on the other hand, are able to connect to their own and other's internal motion. For example, an Idealist will cry in sympathy with another child who is crying. But Idealists have difficulty in conceptualizing and controlling external matter in motion. For example, in toilet training an Idealist has accidents because he/she can't get his/her pants down fast enough or gives up trying.

5. THE RELATIONS IN THE PRODUCTION PROCESS OF DOMINATION AND SUBORDINATION

Through the Knowledge Form, the PI transmits to the child a specific role in the social relations of society: a role of domination or of subordination. The role is first taught through the relations of the production process at home. Inside the family, work is organized according to a division of labor. That is, who does what and how decisions are made is organized according to definite social relations. These are the relations of production within the home; they include all aspects from dishwashing to the monthly budget. The relations of production within the home correspond to the relations of production of society as a whole: for example, the boss-worker relationship, the leader-and-follower relationship, the hierarchy within social groups. These are the relations of domination and subordination. This is to say, that the things the PI does with the child transmit the PI's own position in the relations of production in society to the child. The vehicle of this transmission is the Knowledge Form. (see Glossary, Social: domination vs. subordination.)

Each Knowledge Form has its strengths and its weaknesses. The Idealist is able to see the internal relations of things and thus is better able to understand the world and connect to other people. The Realist is able to see the external relations of things and thus is better able to act in the world and to produce. Each has its strength, yet both are one-sided. One's Knowledge Form is never a personal choice. One does not choose to be an Idealist or a Realist or to be dominant or subordinate in the relations of production. It is neither good nor bad, but rather it is a reflection of the social system within each of us. One can no more avoid being either an Idealist or a Realist than one could avoid breathing polluted air.

6. THE RIGHT TO BE TREATED AS AN EQUIVALENT

The PI consciously and unconsciously attempts to model the child after his/her own image. Despite such attempts, the child will

grow to become a qualitatively different individual. Growing children will demand their right to existence and come into unavoidable conflict with their parents. The PI must then compromise little by little. Once the children's right is respected by the PI, the antagonism will be replaced by harmony. This state of harmonious relations between the child and the PI comes about when the PI takes steps to treat the child as an equivalent.

7. CYCLE OF KNOWLEDGE

The Cycle of Knowledge is a concept that conforms to the movement of the cycles of nature and society. There is the cycle of life [Birth - Childhood - Adulthood - Death], and there is the cycle of the four seasons, for example. Learning, too, has its cycle. One learns by taking one's understanding of specific or particular things or experiences to the general -- in other words, by drawing lessons from one experience which have significance to other similar experiences -- and, on the other hand, by applying general concepts to the particular -- applying lessons from past experience to current or future experience.

Realist children proceed through the Cycle of Knowledge from their particular experience of things. They find it hard to see the total picture and instead look at its parts; they are especially observant of external things. For example, Realist children may be sensitive to changes in the weather (cold, wind, etc.), but be confused about the seasons.

Idealist children, on the other hand, move through the Cycle of Knowledge from the general, but often cannot apply concepts to the particular. To use again the example of the weather, the Idealist may understand the concept of winter, but continue to wear light clothing, remaining unconscious of the cold. Idealists are curious about the internal basis of things (as when one Idealist child tore apart a clock to see how it worked) but may be oblivious to the external conditions, such as the passing of time.

8. TWO SIDED DEVELOPMENT

This brings us to Eastside's purpose of Child Development. Knowledge is not complete unless one can both generalize from the particular and then apply that general understanding to other problems and situations. If a child's Knowledge Form is strengthened and the other side undeveloped, the result is a one-sided child with definite limits to what he/she can learn.

Two-sided development is the basis of our curriculum. It is widely known that one learns by doing, so activities are planned to involve children in real processes, to learn skills they will find useful in the world. Care is taken to gear certain areas of curriculum to develop the weaker sides of Idealists and Realists. For instance, to teach verbal skills to Realists (which are usually difficult for them), computer toys and other games are used. This allows them to use the manipulative skills which come easily to Realists. Motor skills are usually a struggle for Idealists. These are taught in a collective, social situation, using verbal praise and offering considerable physical assistance. Many of the daily routines teach Realists patience and follow-through, such as putting toys away before going on to another activity. Carpentry is a skill which teaches Realist children to plan and measure and be careful with tools. At the same time, carpentry teaches Idealists how to pound and saw forcefully to obtain material results.

In summary, all areas of Eastside's curriculum speak to the development of children who are both Realists and Idealists.

9. CONSISTENT CONDITIONS

Children will proceed through the Cycle of Knowledge building on what they learn at home as well as at the Center. If conditions in both environments are set to enable children to practice a skill or Form of Motion, they will learn it readily and move on to the next step. However, if children at the Center are focusing on different skills than at home, confusion will result. Consistent conditions allow parents and the Center to work together to push forward the children's development.

10. DEVELOPMENTAL AREAS OR CATEGORIES

Understanding child development requires summing up the total of the child's experiences and the child's ability to process new information and new experiences. The child's experience can be broken down into five major categories or areas: Motor, Manipulative, Cognitive, Language and Social. Some children find it easier to learn, or learn more quickly, in one area than another. This is based on the child's Knowledge Form.

Refer to the Glossary for descriptions of the five developmental areas or categories.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, Principal and Non-Principal Influences, Knowledge Forms, and learning which takes place outside of the Cycle of Knowledge can all be barriers to learning. But they do not necessarily have to be.

Through gaining a greater understanding of them, they can be turned into channels for two-sided development. To repeat, this is a continuous process in the everyday activity of raising children.

As parents and teachers engage in the process of sharing their observations, the children's development will be the result of the methods of Child Development that are used. It is our goal to reveal the sequences within the Cycle of Knowledge, and to select and develop methods that will enable children to develop in all areas.