

The socialisation of children

Understanding the theorists

In the Preliminary Course of the Stage 6 syllabus in Family and Community Studies students are required to examine the socialisation of children. Part of this study involves students examining theorists related to the socialisation of children. The names listed in this section of the syllabus are not necessarily “theorists” as we know them in the traditional sense; some are better described as experts in the field of child development and behaviour management.

This article takes a brief look at the “theorists” mentioned in the syllabus. It is important to remember that the students are not restricted to researching only the theorists listed in the syllabus, nor are they expected to develop a detailed understanding of the theorist they research. The emphasis is on developing the critical literacy skills of students.

Urie Bronfenbrenner

Urie Bronfenbrenner adopts an ecological approach to studying human development. He believes that the interactions between a child and its family are the main focus of human development. This perspective assumes that the functioning of children and families can be enhanced by strengthening the quality and quantity of relationships, for example relationships within families, among friends, within neighbourhoods, at schools and within communities.

Bronfenbrenner also stressed the importance of interactions among systems. Systems are situations or contexts within which individuals live their lives. Bronfenbrenner believes that systems can positively or negatively influence families and children. For this reason, communities and social institutions need to work to develop connections between the systems so that there are more positive influences on families and individuals.

Jean Piaget

Jean Piaget is a cognitive developmental theorist. He suggested that individuals are active participants in their own development, constructing knowledge to make sense of their own experience. He believed that all living species have ways of adapting to their environment. Humans are the most adaptable of all. They adapt by using their intelligence, by the active process of gaining understanding of their environment. The peak of development in his model is the capacity for very complex logical reasoning.

His model of the development of thinking recognises the developmental nature of learning. It implies that we must respect the individual's capacity to make sense of the world in his or her own way. It includes recognising the importance of allowing children to discover for themselves important logical knowledge related to their particular stage of development.

Piaget's theory had four stages:

1. Sensory-motor stage
2. Pre-operational stage
3. Concrete operational stage
4. Formal operational stage.

Erik Erikson

Erik Erikson is a psychoanalytical theorist. His theory suggests that we develop through a predetermined unfolding of our personalities in eight stages. In each stage a central problem is posed, where a struggle is fought between positives or negatives e.g. basic trust vs basic mistrust. Our progress through each stage is partly determined by our success or otherwise in the previous stages. Erikson proposed that the effects of these conflicts continue through later stages of development, although he doesn't believe that traumatic experiences occurring in childhood necessarily lead to trouble. Good experiences in later stages can make up for bad ones at an earlier stage.

Erikson's theory has eight stages:

1. Basic trust vs basic mistrust
2. Autonomy vs shame
3. Initiative vs guilt
4. Industry vs inferiority
5. Ego-identity vs role confusion
6. Intimacy vs isolation
7. Generativity vs stagnation
8. Ego-integrity vs despair.

Erikson's theory implies that there is a heavy onus on caregivers to ensure that the child does not become maladjusted, for example, by not being over-protective or allowing too much freedom.

Maurice Balson and Christopher Green

Maurice Balson and Christopher Green are better described as experts in the field of child development and behaviour management. Balson is best known for

his book, *Becoming better parents* (1995), which aims to assist caregivers in managing the behaviour of their children. Green has written numerous books about parenting and managing children's behaviour. He is best known for his book *Toddler taming*. This book provides practical advice for parents on how to cope with some of the problems confronted in the toddler years e.g. toilet training and sleeping problems. It aims to calm the fears and save the sanity of caregivers.

References

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