

Teacher Education Institute (TEI)

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Synopsis - 1 The Whole Child Theory of Child Development

We assert that there exist three stages of development and that this development relates to both mental and physical attributes and the relationship between the two. There exist clear physical indicators that children are moving out of one stage of development and into the next stage.

The stages last approximately from birth to seven; from seven to fourteen and from fourteen to twenty-one. The physical indicator of the child moving from the second to third stage is puberty and this is obviously well documented, no doubt because of the effect of this period on those adults in close proximity to the adolescent!

The physical indicator that the child is moving from the first stage to the second stage is the change of teeth; very little evidence and documentation exists on this physical change. Two qualifications need to be made. The first is that there occur further subdivisions and these will be described in other descriptions on child development. Secondly, we are going to describe the stages as separate from each other. It is obvious, however, that a child does not move from one stage to another overnight so to speak. The changes occur gradually over long periods of time; some changes taking many months - some even longer.

Let us consider the first seven year period. The baby and toddler have very little power of conscious thought in as much as they are not yet conscious of their thinking process; adults' remonstrations (as the saying aptly puts it) "pass over their heads". On the other hand, the activity of the limbs surpasses anything the adult can aspire to. Practically every waking moment is filled with some kind of movement.

The first years of childhood, up until the change of teeth, can therefore be described primarily as the cycle of development concerned with will and not with thinking. One only has to watch a small child at play to see that any perception regarding the results of their actions is almost entirely lacking. Similarly, the bold defiance of toddlers when they are set on getting their own way is an experience that all parents have undergone.

Between the ages of seven and fourteen the emphasis moves from action to feeling. Elementary school children think in a different way to adults. Their thinking is pictorial, uncritical and unspecialized. They possess a rich inner life where imagination and feeling are the main factors influencing their thinking. It is not uncommon for children to express their opinions of life in terms of extremes, of sympathies and antipathies. Healthy children of, say, nine or ten will act and judge almost entirely on their likes and dislikes.

The seven years of the third stage is when the development of logical thought occurs and it reaches its climax towards the end of this period. The example of students studying over their books and weighing everything with logical thought, or their questioning the deepest and profound aspects concerning life illustrates the development and use of the thinking process. At, or towards, the end of the period we recognize this development by respecting the right of the individual to judge, quite independently, the rights and wrongs of life in all its manifestations.

A proper understanding of the seven year cycles, with all that they imply, will help in understanding the growing child. Teachers who use our approach also recognize that they should not force results by causing premature development and that recognition of the stages and their turning points is fundamental to the teaching process.

Syllabus: The Whole Child Theory of Child Development

Overview - An overview of the whole child approach to psychological development. Descriptions of the three stages of development and how development relates to both mental and physical attributes and the relationship between the two. Growth patterns and phases within each stage. The importance of relating content and methodology to growth patterns. Curricula in different subject areas and their relationship to growth patterns.

Syllabus - The first stage of child development, Phases within the first stage of child development, Needs and interests of children in the first stage of child development, Indicators of growth patterns in the process of change from the first to the second stage, Dangers of premature cognitive development. The second stage of child development, Phases within the second stage of child development, Needs and interests of children in the second stage of child development, Indicators of growth patterns in the process of change from the second to the third stage. The third stage of child development, Phases within the third stage of child development, Needs and interests of students in the third stage of child development.