

Developmentalists

During the turn of the twentieth century, the developmentalist label emerged as a significant educational reform movement. G. Stanley Hall (1883, 1911) asserted that the child learns differently from adults, and more effectively in interactive, supportive environments. Gesell (1923) later advanced the idea that research in child learning should inform curriculum content. Dewey's conception of intelligence (1916, 1938) furthered the perspective, along with Piaget's epistemological work (1955, 1970). For developmentalists, the primary function of learning was for the child to achieve higher levels of mental development.

The child's exposure to ever more demanding problems was a key development goal (Yang, 2001). Teachers would recognize the development level, keeping children sufficiently challenged. The teacher's active role in child development is exemplified by anticipating student needs *ahead* of time so that child development is *led* (Vygotsky, 1962).

Relativism and ethical liberalism provide the philosophical blueprint upon which the learning process evolves and education goals are achieved (Kohlberg & Mayer, 1972). The ethical value takes shape in a collaborative manner involving teacher and child, thus fostering shared value decisions. Dewey (1916) notes that education must exhibit liberal and democratic values, withholding any child indoctrination. Development critics point to a fixation with the learner's psychological nature, in the middle class context of Euro-American society (Yang, 2001).

The development philosophy is popular in early childhood education, providing a widely embraced curricular perspective or education approach to these programs

(Edwards, Gandini & Forman, 1993). Early childhood programs such as NAEYC's Developmentally Appropriate Practice illustrate the flourishing curriculum model at work (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997).

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