

A close-up photograph of a woman and a young girl reading a book together. The woman, on the right, has dark hair and is wearing a red shirt. She is looking down at the book with a gentle smile. The girl, on the left, has her hair in braids and is wearing a light green shirt and a blue and white headband. She is also looking at the book. The book is open, and the pages are visible. The background is plain white.

# Child Development Lesson 2

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Objectives:

1. To know the different Theories of Child development in common use today
2. To know the 4 Grand Theories of Child development .

Child Development Theories

An Introduction: Child Development theories are numerous but the aim of this study is to introduce you to the important figures in this field, which have influenced the thoughts and methods of education in our modern times. This is not an exhaustive study and you may wish to do further investigation in this field. We shall be covering the following: 1. Sigmund Freud's theory of how personality developed 2. Erik Erikson's 8 development stages of Man 3. Jean Piaget's Constructivist Theory and Cognitive Development 4. The 4 Grand Theories of Child Development.

#### **Sigmund Freud (1856 - 1939)**

Sigmund Freud was born 6 th of May 1856 of Jewish origins, and became one of Austria's as well as the world's outstanding Neurologist. He is known as the Father of Psychoanalysis. This is a clinical method of treating mental issues through dialogue between the patient and doctor( who is a Psychoanalyst).

Freud's theory of the personality development of the child included the following:

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The 3 states of Mind 1. The 'id' State – the instinctive selfish urges children were born with, it's impulsive and unconscious desires that spring from the child's pleasure points. The child expects immediate gratification 2. The 'ego' State – the child eventually learns that the world does not revolve around them, this is because not all their whims and desires were being met. The child begins to gain a more realistic view of life 3. The 'Super Ego' State – The child learns values and morals from their experiences. They are not able to understand things fully though as special circumstances are not taken into consideration. Everything is still black and white. Making basic generalizations is what the child does here.

Freud believed that the ego and the super ego states worked together to control the id.

He also believed that parenting methods and attitudes determined personality development, that a child's earlier life experiences influenced and results in later adult behavior, the unconscious mind influences behavior and that dreams were also very important. Dreams he believed were also important and he famously linked a person's thinking, feeling and his social and sexual relationships with early physical behavior. (This is Freud's

Psychosexual Theory- the stages include: Oral, Anal, Phallic, Latency and Genital Stages)

### **Erik Erikson (1902 – 1994)**

Erik Erikson was an American Psychoanalyst trained by Anna Freud, Freud's daughter. So you can safely say he was influenced a great deal by the Freudian line of thought. Freud's theory on personality was his foundation and he used the super ego and the influence of society as the points of concentration of his own understanding of how a child developed into a man. He identified 8 developmental stages, 5 in childhood and 3 in adulthood. We shall only look at the first five stages in detail, as these are the stages that cover the age group of a child to young persons.

1. Birth to 1-year-old. Trust vs. Mistrust stage- Strengths that will develop here is Hope. If the care giver is consistent with care and provides adequate attention to the child at this stage of life, the child would feel secure and trust will ensure. The opposite is the case if care is inconsistent, you will find such children afraid, fearful and insecure. The child will develop a view of the world as inconsistent and will mistrust adults.

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2. From 1 to 3-year-old. Autonomy vs. Shame – Strengths that will develop here is Willpower. The child will begin to make choices for self, asserting independence. It is important to support a child at this stage. For example, she may want to play with certain toys and not others, she may want to wear this dress and not the other. Support is important so that self-confidence and independence can begin to develop. They need to believe and feel secure in the fact that they can survive in the world. If you always control and criticize their choices the child will begin to feel insecure, inadequate, shame and would start to doubt their ability to do anything right.

3. From 3 to 6-year-old. Initiative vs. Guilt – The Strength that will develop here is Purpose. At this stage children are interested in planning activities they tend to assert themselves much more, Erickson's take on this is to encourage the child along. If an adult is always controlling and criticizing their plans the child develops a sense of guilt, doubting their ability to take initiative in matters around them. A good response to the child at this point of the child's development will foster great leadership skills in later endeavors, whereas negative reactions to the child will only result in lack of purpose and self confidence. The child now becomes a follower and not a leader.

4. From 6 to 12-year-old (puberty). Industry vs. Inferiority - Strength that will develop here is Competence. At this point the child starts to develop a sense of pride in their work, they concentrate on presentation, come up with projects get down to planning and executing and seeing their work right up to completion. They feel good about the fact that they have achieved something. Adults must encourage and reinforce the positive initiatives taken by the child, this will encourage confidence in the child, and he will feel industrious and be inspired to do more and better work. If the reaction of the adult is opposite to the above the child will feel inferior and doubt his abilities. The result would be a child who is unable to reach his best potential.

5. From 12 to 18-year-old Identity vs. Role Confusion. – Strength that will develop here is Fidelity. This a very crucial stage of development for the child as the outcome of this developmental stage is that she develops a identity of her own separate from her parents, the should child who he is and what career he wants to pursue. If this development is stalled the child becomes confused and does not know what he wants to do or be.

6. The Young Adult (in their 20's) Intimacy vs. Isolation-Strength that will develop here is love.

7. Mature Adult (20's to 50's) Generativity vs. Stagnation- Strength that will develop here is care.

8. Old Age (50's and beyond) Ego Integrity vs. Despair- Strength that will develop here is wisdom.

### **Jean Piaget (1896 – 1890)**

Jean Piaget who lived between 1896 and 1980 was a Swiss psychologist, whose work has greatly influenced the study of how children develop in the 20 th Century.

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Piaget actually started his career as a trained biologist but soon became interested in the cognitive development of children from working on intelligence tests. He noticed that children would usually give the same wrong answers to questions and he set out to find out why. He used his children to make detailed observations and was able to develop a theory on the stages of children's cognitive development. This theory has influenced education in many countries and acted as a starting point for other theories and research.

Piaget was interested in how a child arrived at what they knew. He looked for the process of how the child's cognitive skills develop.

Piaget proposed several facts that he observed these include 1. That children interact with their environment and this leads to learning 2. Children construct their knowledge by giving meaning to people, places and things that they come in contact with 3. Children are active learners, and their curiosity drives their learning. 4. Children use first hand experiences to learn- they learn best when they discover things themselves, they give it their own meaning rather than the meaning provided by adults 5. Children go through several stages of development but their individual development is unique affected by physical development and specific interactions with the environment. 6. Children will imitate and transform what they learn into symbolic behavior

Piaget's theories provided ideas and insights for later researchers to work and build on. His stages of development included the Sensorimotor, Pre-operational, Concrete operations and Formal operations stages. The Sensorimotor stage occurs during the ages of 0 to 2 years; the child develops from having physical reflexes to co-ordinated movements, develops an awareness of the permanence of objects and begins to learn to use a symbol, which is language, words representing things. The Pre-operational stage considers children between the ages of 2 and 7, in which the child uses symbols, which is language, in play and thought. The period is further divided into two further categories but has four major features running through both: 1. Egocentrism – children at this stage saw things only from their own perspective 2. Lack of Conservation – children find it difficult to accept that things can remain the same even though their appearance can change 3. Centration – this is the beginning stages of classification for children; they usually are only able to classify things looking at just one attribute at a time. Therefore a child may be able to sort things by size and then by color but not size and color at the same time. 4. Animism – children believe that because they have feelings other objects must have feelings.

Concrete operations stage, the age range is between 7 and 11 years, at this stage children now learn to conserve, they can solve mental problems using practical supports such as counters and objects. Formal operations stage is between the ages of 11 and 15, children can now manipulate ideas abstractly, calculate without counters, and start deductive logic. Piaget's work has been criticized a lot, the research methods were for some not scientific enough for such a subject, the stages and the age references were considered not quite right, that babies object permanence skills were much more pronounced and better developed than he thought. Regardless of these criticisms it is obvious that his theories informed a lot of the basis of western education practices in the general sense and specifically the American Pre-School curriculum is based on his theory that children should be kept curious, offering them experiences rather than information.

The 4 Grand Theories of Child Development:

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1. Behaviorism- Children are believed to be passive recipients and their behaviour is shaped by the environment. So they are believed to be conditioned by external influences. This theory was prevalent in the 1950's and considered how the environment one lived in influenced their behavior. The process of learning was referred to as conditioning. The works of Ivan Pavlov and B.F. Skinner are controversial behaviorist theories. Ivan Pavlov believed that children learned through association – classical conditioning, while B.F. Skinner believed that children learned through repetitive reinforcements, this was known as operant conditioning. 2. Social Learning Theory – This theory believed that children learned simply by observing others. Albert Bandura was one of the great theorists who followed this line of thought. They challenged the behaviorist; they believed that the child took an active part in learning. 3. Constructivism- Children are believed to construct their thoughts and ideas from their experiences. So the environment had something to do with it but the children were not passive, as they used what was around them to build and develop their ideas. Piaget was known as a Constructivist. His work was a springboard for others and was considered to have a lot of lapses, he used interviews which could be biased, latter scholars asked if it was possible for cognitive development to happen in stages (it was biology based). More importantly it has been proved that he underestimated the abilities of babies and the influence of what training could achieve in a child. Piaget believed that age determined ability. 4. Social Constructivism - This theory believes that children develop ideas and concept from their experiences as well as social interactions. Lev Vygotsky was a social constructivist, he focused on how children could learn from others around them rather than give stages of cognitive development.

This is just a brief account to give you a framework of understanding of what the theories are that underpin Early Years Education practices and its development over the years, It will also help you see where Maria Montessori fits into all these education thoughts, the similarities and differences in her observation about children how they develop and how they learn.

**Please Download and read the Resource pdf file provided.**

Activity Sheet Do a search online about the main Theorists and the 4 grand theories of education and see how much more information you can acquire. Remember this is a very vast area of study. Compare what you are learning to what you know about the Montessori Method. You do not need to submit the answers they are to help you understand and apply new knowledge gained to your circumstance, environment and outlook.