

Theories of Development

Theories of Development – Study Notes

1. Overview

- **Goal of developmental theories** – Explain how and why people change physically, cognitively, and socially from birth through adulthood.
 - **Two broad perspectives**
 1. **Stage-based** – Development proceeds through qualitatively different periods.
 2. **Continuous/Process-based** – Change is gradual, cumulative, and shaped by ongoing interactions with the environment.
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2. Psychoanalytic & Psychodynamic Theories

Theorist	Core Idea	Key Stages / Concepts	Educational Implications
Sigmund Freud	Personality develops through conflicts among id, ego, superego; early experiences are decisive.	Psychosexual stages – Oral (0-1yr), Anal (1-3yr), Phallic (3-6yr), Latency (6-puberty), Genital (puberty-adult).	Emphasize safe, supportive early environments; recognize how unresolved conflicts may affect behavior.
Erik Erikson	Lifespan extension of Freud; each stage involves a psychosocial crisis that must be resolved.	8 stages – Trust vs. Mistrust, Autonomy vs. Shame, Initiative vs. Guilt, Industry vs. Inferiority, Identity vs. Role Confusion, Intimacy vs. Isolation, Generativity vs. Stagnation, Integrity vs. Despair.	Classroom climate should foster competence, identity exploration, and supportive relationships at each age.
Anna Freud / John Bowlby (Attachment)	Early attachment shapes later emotional regulation and relationships.	Secure, anxious-ambivalent, anxious-avoidant, disorganized attachment patterns.	Consistent caregiver presence ? secure attachment ? better academic engagement.

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3. Cognitive Development Theories

Theorist	Core Idea	Main Stages / Processes	Classroom Applications
Jean Piaget	Children construct knowledge through active interaction; development is stage-like.	Sensorimotor (0-2yr) ? Preoperational (2-7) ? Concrete Operational (7-11) ? Formal Operational (11-adult).	Use hands-on activities (sensorimotor), concrete manipulatives (concrete ops), and abstract problem-solving (formal ops).
Lev Vygotsky	Social interaction and cultural tools drive cognition; learning precedes development.	Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) – tasks a child can perform with guidance.	Scaffolding, collaborative learning, language-rich environments.
Information Processing Theory	Mind functions like a computer: encoding, storage, retrieval; development is quantitative (speed, capacity).	Attention, working memory, long-term memory, executive functions improve with age.	Teach metacognitive strategies, chunking, graphic organizers.
Robert Siegler (Overlapping Waves)	Multiple strategies coexist; children gradually favor more efficient ones.	Emphasizes variability and gradual shift rather than abrupt stage change.	Encourage strategy discussion; allow multiple solution paths.

4. Moral Development

Theorist	Core Idea	Stages	Educational Relevance
Lawrence Kohlberg	Moral reasoning evolves through hierarchical stages.		