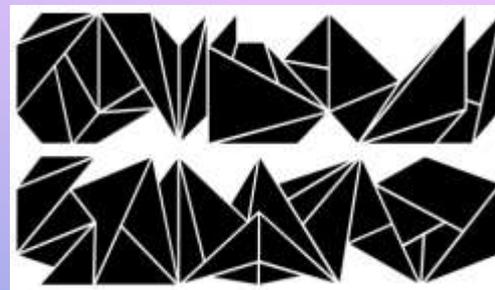


The Unfolding of Children: Inspiring Thinking on Child Development



A presentation by

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Early Education Annual National Conference
Oxford, 7th May 2016



Outline

- Starting provocations and comments
- Amazing facts about the child development in the Foundation Years: Quiz time!
- Children's unfolding competencies and talents
- Ecological influences on development
- Creating an enabling environment for development

Starting Provocations

I believe that:

- Constant, accelerated change is the most striking characteristic of the modern world and the school system has yet to fully recognize this
- Acquiring (or sustaining) the abilities, attributes and attitudes to deal adequately with change over a lifetime are a priority for our youngest children
- The current school system often avoids the promotion of these significant, life long learnings in a rush to push children towards a narrowly defined set of learning competencies and can sometimes appear to punish creativity, initiative and independence
- Rethinking what we now know about child development may therefore stimulate a fundamental shift in our thinking about learning, learners and the role of schools and schooling in modern 21st century society which demands an ambition that learning throughout life should be inspirational, democratic, active and participatory for all

Preliminary comments

- Early Years practitioners have been given the gift of spending more time with children and from an earlier age
- More capacity (power) to influence and shape children's development
- Have to use this gift of time responsibly and with a deep understanding of the process of children's development and the conditions that enable healthy growth and development over time
- Focus must be on developing child's motivation and confidence as a learner rather than focusing on a specific set of skills and competencies

Amazing facts about child development in the Foundation Years: True or False?

1. The 5-8 year old child has the fastest rate of brain development across the entire human life span
2. The average 4 year old asks around 300 questions a day
3. Social interactions enhance the speed and accuracy of learning at all ages
4. Music boosts spatial orientation skills
5. Children who watch more than five hours of television, videos, or DVDs a day have a higher chance of conduct problems, emotional symptoms, and relationship problems by the time they are 7 than children who do not
6. Development starts with the toes and feet and moves up the body to the head
7. Children learn more from adults who smile

What do we know about development in the Foundation Years?

- Years from birth to around 8 are formative in determining later achievement and earlier intervention leads to better outcomes: lucrative investment with high returns
- ‘Sensitive’ periods in certain areas of development (under six) eg dispositions, language, movement
- Key areas for life long achievement: Executive skills eg sociability, self management, agency, persistence, creative stance, self regulation
- Social action and interaction (with adults and children) significantly enhances a child’s innate skills and attributes
- Play is the magic dust in children’s learning process: without it learning stops (and it is a UN Right!)

The link between body and mind

Physical development is fundamental to all other development

Supports the development of the healthy, growing child as well as the cognitive, thinking child

Importance of physical movement to child's overall learning, development and well being

NB: Children need to move to think and learn

Children's unfolding competencies and talents

Developmental Stages:

- Prenatal: Conception to birth
- Infancy and toddlerhood: birth to 3 years
- Early childhood: 3 to 6 years old
- Middle childhood: 6 to 12 years old
- Later childhood: 12 to 19 years old

Today focus on middle three stages and three key development (prime) areas:

- Personal, social, emotional
- Communication and language
- Physical

Children's unfolding competencies and talents: Principles of growth and development

- Continuous process of metamorphosis and transformation
- Predictable sequence but not timing
- Children don't progress at the same rate
- Not all body parts grow in the same rate at the same time
- Each child grows in his/her own unique way
- Each stage is affected by the preceding stage of development.

Children's unfolding competencies and talents: Key development areas

Personal, social, emotional: establishing personal identity, temperament, attitudes and dispositions to learning, how to interact with others, develop friendships and recognize and express feelings

Communication and language: learning to receive, interpret and send messages, how to reason and use complex thought processes, creativity

Physical: changes in body size and proportion, appearance, bone and muscular development and coordination (motor skills)

***NB: ALL CHILDREN HAVE TALENTS AND COMPETENCIES IN THESE AREAS:
Should be a relentless focus by practitioners on these three areas***

Infancy and Toddlerhood

Unfolding: Birth to three years

Share what skills and competencies the two boys are developing

- Personal, social, emotional?
- Communication and language?
- Physical?





"Pat-a-cake? — Sorry, but that part of my life is over."

Early childhood Unfolding: Three to six Years

Share what skills and competencies the small group are developing

- Personal, social, emotional?
- Communication and language?
- Physical?



A young child with light hair is shown in profile, looking intently at a tablet device held in their hands. The scene is dimly lit, with the primary light source being the screen of the tablet, which casts a soft glow on the child's face and hands. The background is dark, suggesting an indoor setting at night or in a low-light environment. The child is wearing a light-colored, possibly white, long-sleeved shirt.

What
next?

Middle childhood Unfolding: Six to twelve years

Share what skills and competencies the children are developing

- Personal, social, emotional?
- Communication and language?
- Physical?



Ecological influences on development: Tadpole metaphor

- Quality of relationships: attachment
- Family daily life: routines and nurture
- Regular activities and experiences
- Physical environment: Shelter, nutrition, outdoor/indoor
- Health and well being

Number 1 is Number 1

Creating enabling learning environments

- Warm, nurturing ethos and framed but flexible programme
- Active and problem posing pedagogy
- Centrality of play and imagination/creativity in activities
- Supporting the co-construction of activities and working with children's ideas
- Sustaining and extending dialogues (reflective conversations)
- The importance of socio-emotional learning in the group
- Nurturing team culture and individual agency; discipline and creativity

REMEMBER:

“The path of development is a journey of discovery that is clear only in retrospect, and it’s rarely a straight line.”

Eileen Kennedy-Moore

