

Socio-Cultural Approaches to Learning and Development

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Introduction

In an educational environment, it becomes vital to understand the importance of creating an environment for students to benefit from. A better environment ensures that students will be able to learn, acquire, and develop their skills. With the support of the instructor present to solve their queries and groom them, these students will be able to excel more in their field of interest.

Socio-cultural and environmental influences

Socio-Cultural Learning Theory

Socio-cultural [learning theory](#) is formulated on the concept that a learner perceives and learns from his/her environment, and as such, the environment plays an important role in their development. One of the researchers in this field, Vygotsky, proposed the theory, which comprised three important elements that made up its theme: language, area of proximal development, and culture.

Language

The socio-learning theory presents that language results from the tools and symbols that arise from inside a culture. People can learn a language by participating in various events, social gatherings, scenarios, and processes that contribute to learning (Kozulin 2003). This idea of Sociocultural solely depends on the concept that every learning individual undergoes three important stages essential for speech development. The first stage relates to the factors of an environment, which is associated with and best known as "Social speech." It initiates at the early ages of a child, around the age of 2 years. The second stage initiates and teaches them about "private speech," which a child picks up at the age of 3, and it is at that time when thoughts are spoken out loud. The third and final stage deals with the process of developing "inner speech" at the age of 7.

Area of Proximal Development

Proximal Development deals with properly ascertaining the divide between the individual's intended educational development by participating in problem-solving and the actual development that takes

place. This is best analyzed by studying the individual during the problem-solving situation under the supervision of an instructor.

Culture

Vygotsky argues and promotes the concept that culture is formed through the implementation of various tools and symbols that work as catalysts in the background. This presents itself as a unique identifier in defining the edge the human race has over the animals. The key source to developing intelligence resides in the fact that humans can internalize the available tools and symbols in their culture.

Environment Influence

Learning is greatly influenced by the environment, and similarly, the factors that are present in the environment will become the sole determinants of the learning development phase. A child's first learning experience is greatly affected by the educational environment they are provided. The research presented by Derek encases a scenario where if a student is kept without any books within that room, no pictures to view, or no one to interact with, it will be more than likely that the student will start to have a declining interest towards education and will lose interest in learning anything eventually. He further proposed that if an ideal [learning environment](#) were created, the student must be in a stimulating environment. Research has also proven that students' overall performance has been elevated if education-stimulating factors exist around them or if the environment is friendly, comfortable to learn in, and altogether welcoming.

Impact on Socio-Economic Classes

Socio-Economic factor commonly known as Socio-Economic Status (SES) covers portions including income, acquisition of education, securing financial standing, and the subjective concept of social status and the social standing within the class system. The SES explains the procedure through which individuals in society can gain opportunities and privileges (Stephens 2014 pp. 943-953). The power of affordability plays a major role in the SES and determines if the individuals in a society can acquire these commodities. The effect of SES is visible through other realms and determines how effective it will be for people.

SES associated Educational Issues

Detailed research conducted from this perspective revealed that children from families with lower SES scales could not develop their skills and were slow in this aspect. However, children from a higher SES scale could develop them much faster comparably. It can be best exemplified by relating to an example of a low SES family. Children in low SES families could not acquire better education due to

the dominating financial standards that determined the educational institutes they could attend. It is also reflected in their slower cognitive, memory, language, and socioeconomically development. It also affected how they were brought up, putting them at lower health and economic levels. The best way to approach and address this problem is by introducing various measures that can improve the level of schools and their educational system, which may assist in decreasing the overall dropout rate among children from low-SES families.

Gender Influences and Educational Achievements

The general dualism theory that prevails between the opposing genders (man and woman) has always been one of the decisive factors in existence, determining the different attitudes and cultures that have adapted to address this problem. The difference between males and females is not entirely based on the biology that defines them but also on the fact of their social roles, responsibilities, the norms and values they adopt, function, and behavioral elements found in them. These elements have always been the ideal determinant in deciding the maleness and femaleness in society. Socio-economic literature defines and addresses the difference between genders by explaining the distinctive traits of men and women through their genetic makeup or biologically different sex.

On closer inspection, the existing problem of gender stratification in the present era's educational system is nearly non-existent. The problem of gender equality that is an educational system is certainly defined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which explains that education is available for anyone and everyone, without any differences or restrictions such as race, ethical background, culture, social or sexual discrimination. Presently, the issue regarding the education for women is no longer any longer. However, factors still present such a problem based on masculine and feminine educational opportunities. One of the researchers shows that boys have more opportunities for subjects with more demand in the market. These subjects include mathematics, informatics, engineering, and science subjects, whereas girls are more interested and have better options in subjects like literature, languages, art, and history. These subjects determine their future career.

Gender Inequality and Differences

To better understand the elements that contribute to gender-based educational preferences, it is imperative to understand the cause behind it fully. Studies on this subject have brought forward a finding that explains two major prevailing reasons that define the cause of this difference in the educational system. These gender-based differences and to properly consider and analyze them, the two reasons are,

Genetic Differencing

The first and foremost reason deals with the biological factor and how upbringing plays a role. The biological argument is based entirely on the concept of inherited genes and the gene factor in understanding the mental capabilities of an individual. These mental capabilities further explain the divide between men and women. Considering hunting, it was evident in the old days that men were mostly the ideal candidates for pursuing hunting as their main career. This assumption is based on the fact that men usually showed signs of utilizing the right side of their brain's hemisphere, which resulted in the phylogenetic development. The phylogenetic development assists with space-visual perception and a better approach to mathematics. Regarding the women, they utilized the left side of their brain more, resulting in the development of the brain's left hemisphere. It assisted them in acquiring a better command of perceptual and verbal skills. Another factor that played an essential role in this development was their role as mothers. This biological argument presents a better insight towards the understanding that boys perform better in science and technical subjects, whereas girls can excel better in humanitarian and language subjects.

Socialization Factor

The second reason presents the idea that most educational differences are caused by the important elements present in our environment such as social and cultural values. The socialization elements explain the upbringing and the focus on social development a child acquires in schools. Schools play an important role in identifying themselves as the training grounds for social skill development since the child's first interaction with his/her peers will determine their position among them while the classroom plays the part of being the laboratory for examining the purpose gender roles play in our society and how to interact with the opposing gender. These gender roles further help them understand their role in society based on the difference between masculinity and femininity. In this new environment, the child is taught to befriend children of similar sex, and the training replaces their home-taught values with those of the school. The other role that the second approach plays a part in, is identifying and elaborating on the role teachers play in addressing children from the male and female gender, their behavior and attitude towards them, and the kind of social treatment opted for in this case. Similarly, in this situation when a girl achieves a higher grade in a subject unassociated with their gender-based interest, the teachers will not appreciate nor compliment them. Still, if a boy were to get fewer marks the teachers will merely state this error as "smart but mostly lazy."

Potential Influence of Cultural Factors in terms of Education

Cultural Influences

Several elements are present in most countries that enforce certain cultural barriers that prevent students from fully learning and understanding some problems. A situation such as this gives birth to cultural influences being effective and socio-economic and sociocultural differences. From the learning perspective, cultural influences become a dominating factor in aiding the students to understand and better perceive their education. To better understand cultural influences, it is essential to determine the cultural values before deciding on methods of resolving them.

In many cultures, several customs and practices limit female education; the most prominent is Asian culture. Many Asian countries have been noticed to implement practices that either prohibit or restrict education for females or permit them to study up to a certain grade or level if allowed. This kind of education is not sufficient enough to allow them to attain a higher-paying job and as such becomes a prominent issue in gender-based inequality.

Cultural Influences and Educational Achievement

Cultural values' influence on beliefs being followed and their importance in the education system cannot be underestimated or overestimated. It is imperative to comprehend the practices that are followed in certain cultures. To better exemplify this scenario, Asian classrooms usually follow the ritual of the students keeping their heads down and avoiding direct eye contact since it is considered to be disrespectful. However, in comparison, European and American schools value active participation and encourage this practice. Another example is that Hispanic parents who value their teachers too much and will always consult them in terms of educational advice. Compared to them, European and American parents are too involved in their children's education, classroom activity, and the educational schedule they follow, and they provide help to teachers. This may cause the educators to decide and make inaccurate judgments. These examples present a clear and precise insight into how cultural values and their influences can affect children beginning their education, their participation in schools, and how their educational grooming is performed. Another common cultural influence is that of language preference. Most cultures impose the learning of a specific language and make it mandatory for children to learn it before progressing further in their educational development. The theory of Cultural deficit provides a helpful insight into this matter.

Cultural Deficit Theory

The theory of social deficit presents the view that most students perform poorly in their education due to the social, linguistic, and cultural nature of the environment in their homes. For instance, some children may not have books read to them; this can cause the children to have a lower vocabulary development compared to other children in their age group. Another contributor to lower vocabulary is their level of social interaction at home. Having an interaction that requires a lower vocabulary level

will result in the children being unable to understand their subjects in school fully. The theory of social deficit aims at the deficiencies that may be found at home, the home environment provided to children, their behavior, and knowledge development. These elements contribute to their lower-level performance in schools.

Conclusion

The primary aspiration of Vygotsky was to devise a new technique to look at and come up with an answer to instructive and social problems of the time. He believed other factors, other than biological instincts, caused humans to operate the way they do. He was the initial modern psychologist to propose how culture plays a part in each person's nature. Vygotsky believed that including sign systems in a child's culture changes behavior and interfaces early and later individual development forms. Vygotsky was a strong enthusiast of the idea that what children learned from other people in their own culture made a difference in their development. He considers human thought processes to be based on social connections and speech. The zone of proximal development, private speech, and make-believe play are three key areas of sociocultural theory. Gender influences play a prominent role in determining a child's educational perspective and potential cultural factors that inspire or demotivate children. Each of these factors becomes a dominating factor for education in every culture and can determine education and gender discrimination when it comes to education. The socio-Cultural theory of learning provides a better look into how better outcomes can be acquired and how to groom a child's educational skills.

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