DIRECTORATE OF DISTANCE EDUCATION
LALIT NARAYAN MITHILA UNIVERSITY
KAMESHWARNAGAR, DARBHANGA

B.ED. PROGRAMME

COURSE1 : CHILDHOOD AND GROWING UP

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COURSE INTRODUCTION

❖ This paper offers an introduction to the study of childhood, child development and adolescence. It builds an interdisciplinary framework to interpret and analyze observations and interaction with children from diverse socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. The theoretical framework of this paper has been drawn from cross-cultural psychology, sociology and anthropology to bring together theories of child development and crucial aspects from the construct of childhood, which has political, social and cultural dimensions.

JUSTIFICATION OF THE TITLE

‣ In the present context, a child is no more a biological entity rather he/she is a bio-psycho-social entity who is no more a clean slate. He /she is already having a very rich understanding, has a diverse knowledge gained through interaction with his/her socio-cultural context respectively. It means that if a teacher wishes to plan the learning experiences for the children then he/she must have to understand the child in totality i.e. in order to plan why to teach, what to teach, how to teach and what kind of expectations we have to keep from our students, it is not just enough to understand the psychology of learners but we have to understand their psychology in socio-cultural perspectives. That's why this paper entitled as "Childhood and Growing Up" is an attempt to understand the learners in their childhood and adolescent stage of development form an interdisciplinary approach.

COURSE 1: CHILDHOOD AND GROWING UP

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

After going through the course, you will be able to-

- Develop an understanding of the notions of childhood and adolescence;

- Develop an understanding about the influence of socio-cultural context in shaping human development;

- Develop an understanding of dimensions and stages of human development and developmental tasks ;

- Appreciate the critical role of learner differences and contexts in making meanings, and draw out implications for schools and teachers;

- Understand socialization and its role in identity formation of a child;

- Understand identity formation and its determinants.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course comprises of five major units namely-

- ❖ Unit 1- Understanding Childhood

- ❖ Unit 2 - Understanding Adolescence

- ❖ Unit 3- Understanding Socialization and the context of the Learners

- ❖ Unit 4- Understanding Differences in Learners

- ❖ Unit 5- Learner's Identity Development

UNIT 1: UNDERSTANDING CHILDHOOD

In the first unit of course 1, we will discuss about-

a.   Concept of Childhood : Historical and contemporary Perspectives; Major discourse ;

b.   Key Factors during Childhood: Family, Neighborhood, Community and School ;

c.   Children and their Childhood: The Contemporary realities with special focus on Bihar ;

d.   Development of learner: physical, cognitive, language, social, and moral; their interrelationships and implications for teachers (with reference to Piaget, Erickson and Kohlberg).

UNIT 1: UNDERSTANDING CHILDHOOD

a)Concept of Childhood: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives, Major Discourse-

Who is a child? How does a society differentiate between a child and an adult? How such distinction influences the lives of adult and children? Does this have a connection with the concepts of justice, equity and equality? This Unit implicitly ponders over such questions and helps us reflect on the concepts of 'child', childhood and adult.

Who is a child?

- *Children are: innocent, god's gift, pure and truthful, sweet, cute, playful, 'childish', funny, idiot, naughty, fragile, protected, soft, like potters clay.*

- *Childhood is: a tender age, most protected time of life, free, dependent most enjoyable phase in life, age of fun and frolic.*

These are some general perceptions that most of us have about children and childhood. These do not explain children's experiences. Some children come from a deprived context, and have different experiences. Do you think all children, including those coming from better-off families, have same experiences? Since experiences of children are different, it would be problematic to think of children as one category, and attribute one single 'definition' childhood.

Definition of Child in Different Perspectives:

There are different and even conflicting perspectives about meaning of child and childhood-

i.   **The age criterion:**

❖ A human being is considered to be a child from birth till the onset of puberty (0- 13 years) in the average child. Childhood is this age span ranging from birth to puberty.

❖ There is a debate around this demarcation of age. Some argue that child comes into existence and the childhood starts, even before the child is born. That is, in the foetus stage itself. This is one reason why in many countries it is a crime to 'kill' the foetus after a particular stage in his/her development. Some argue that childhood extends till a period one gains all legal rights as 'adults'. In India, this would mean that till 18 years of age one is a child.

ii. Legal view: The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child defines a child as a human being below the age of 18 years.

❖ While the Juvenile Justice Act in India considers persons below 14 years of age to be children, the Right to Education Act 2009 narrows the definition down to persons between 6 to 14 years.

❖ The different articles of Indian Constitution and Acts put various age limits for a child. Article 21 A of the Constitution of India says that the State shall provide free and compulsory education to all children within the ages of 6 and 14. Article 45 of the Constitution specifies that the State shall endeavor to provide early childhood care and education for all children until they complete the age of 6.

❖ Under the Child Labour Prohibition and Regulation Act, 1986 a child is a person who has not completed 14 years of age. The Indian Mines Act defines children as those below 18 years.

All over the world the age for legal adulthood differs. In India it is 18 years, in Iran it is 15 years, in Scotland it is 16 years, in Japan it is 20 years, and in Egypt it is 21 years.

What do you think are the implications of legal age on life? Till one attains legal adulthood, one is a protected citizen. Therefore children, adolescents or minors, are responsibility of their guardians and the government.

iv. Child as a labour: Large number of children work in factories, at small shops, do domestic chores, engage in begging, pushed into prostitution. Childhood in poverty, and experiences of children in impoverished contexts, are very different than in better of situations. They are perceived as helping hands in family's subsistence and do not live much differently than adults.

v. Childhood in History: The meaning and description of children varies across time periods in history. A French historian called Philippe Ariès, analyzed how children were depicted in history. Using works of art, letters etc. he explored how the meaning of childhood evolved from Medieval times onwards to the present-

"Philippe Aries' wrote that childhood is a very new concept. It did not exist at all in the Medieval period. He found there were no children depicted in paintings of that era. There were only very young babies or adults. All those who were not babies were painted in adult dresses, with adult body language, and adult-like expressions. Most young people were apprenticed, became workers in the fields and entered the adult roles at a very early age. Even 'people' of around seven years of age were seen as little adults, and not as children."

- The Medieval cultures lacked the concept of childhood. Childhood is a later historical creation. It came into existence among the rich people (upper class) in the 16th and 17th centuries. It further developed in the 18th century among the upper class. And it finally emerged on the scene in the 20th century in both the upper and lower classes.

- Once the institution of childhood began to emerge, the situation of the young person began to change in society. First they were named children. A theory of innocence of the child emerged. Children were to be protected from adult reality. The facts of birth, death, sex, tragedy and adult world events, were hidden from the child. Children were increasingly segregated by age.

—Philippe Aries (1962), Centuries of Childhood

- Another thinker, John Holt, writes about young people and their place, or lack of place, in modern society. He talks about the institution of modern childhood, the attitude, customs and laws that define and locate children in modern life and determine, to a large degree, what their lives are like, and how we, their elders treat them. And also about many ways in which modern childhood seems to him to be bad for most of those who live within it and how it should and might be changed.

—John Holt (1974), Escape from Childhood

There have been different ways in which childhood has been perceived in different times in the history of civilization. Therefore, childhood is not a given; it is a concept which develops through adults' lenses, and ways of perceiving young growing-up people in the society.

v. Childhood in different cultures:

❖ In different cultures there is a variation in children's social position and roles. These variations are seen between rural and urban areas, between different communities, and countries.

❖ In India, in rural areas there is less variation between children and adults, as compared to urbanizing spaces. It is said that 'adolescence' is not seen as a separate phase in childhood. As soon as a child becomes physically mature to take up adult roles, s/he starts assuming adult roles -earning income, doing all household work, wear adult-like clothes, and even get married at an earlier age.

❖ It is argued that concept of adolescence (as a phase of transition from childhood to adulthood) has come in existence in India and in many other countries off late.

- The English word 'child' comes from the Teutonic root and from the gothic word for womb. The English word 'baby' is originated from resembling the first sounds made by the infant which sound like "be-be" or "ba-ba". In English the baby is also referred to as as 'infant', which has its roots in defining a person who cannot speak (in = not, fans = speaking).

- In Japanese the newborn baby is called 'aka-chan' (aka = red, and chan = title given to giving children). This is simply because the skin of the baby appears reddish in colour.

- The word childhood means the state of being a child. Till the end of the twentieth century the idea of childhood as a separate social category had been paid very little attention. According to cultural norms and expectations the definition of childhood also varies.

Historical and Contemporary Perspective:

❖ Studies claim that childhood was regarded as a separate period of life in the fifth and sixth centuries. Religious writings contained contradictory depictions of children's basic nature, sometimes portraying them as possessed by the devil and in need of purification, at other times as innocent.

❖ In the sixteenth century, puritan belief gave rise to the view that children were born evil and had to be civilized. Harsh, restrictive child rearing practices were recommended to tame the child.

❖ Conceptions of childhood were more humane in the 17th century. John Locke viewed the child as a tabula rasa (blank slate) whose characters are shaped by experiences. He recommended child-rearing practices, use of praise and reward and opposed physical punishment. Locke's philosophy led to a change from harshness toward children to kindness and compassion.

- In the 18th century, French philosopher Jean Jaccques Rousseau claimed that children are noble savages, naturally endowed with a sense of right or wrong and an innate plan for healthy growth. His was a child-centred philosophy in which the adult should be receptive to the child's need at each four stages: infancy, childhood, later childhood and adolescence.

- Inspired by Darwin's theory of evolution the study on childhood evolved quickly in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

- Soon after, Stanley Hall and Arnold Gesell introduced normative approach, which produced a large body of descriptive facts about children. They regarded child development as maturational process- a genetically determined process. Gesell made knowledge about child development meaningful to parents by informing what to expect at each age.

- American Psychologist James Baldwin regarded children and their social surroundings as mutually influential.

- In the mid- twentieth century, focus on childhood and child development expanded into a legitimate discipline.

- According to Psychoanalytical perspective, children move through a series of stages in which they confront conflict between biological drives and social expectations. How these conflicts are resolved determines child's ability to learn.

- Among the Psychoanalysts, it was Sigmund Freud, who in his Psychosexual Theory emphasized that how parents manage their child's sexual and aggressive drives in the first few years is crucial for healthy personality development. (parent-child relationship).

- Later on, Behaviourism emerged and Skinner's Operant Conditioning theory emphasized the role of reinforcement and punishment in shaping child's behaviour. Albert Bandura in his Social learning Theory emphasied Modelling through which children acquire new response.

- Concept of childhood has also been discussed according to the contemporary perspectives as Cognitivism and Constructivism.

Major Discourse :

There are three basic issues-

I.   Is the course of development continuous or discontinuous?

II. Does one course of development characterizes all children, or are there many possible courses?

III. What are the roles of genetic and environmental factors- nature and nurture- in the development?

b) Key Factors during Childhood: Family, Neighborhood, Community and School-

▸ It is apt here to mention Urie Bronfenbrenner's Ecological System Theory or Bioecological Model, 2005 which offers the most complete account of contextual influences on children's development.

▸ According to him, the environment is a series of nested structures that form a system-microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem and macrosystem and include home, family, neighborhood, community, school etc in which children spend their everyday lives. The chronosystem represents the dynamic, ever-changing nature of children and their experiences.
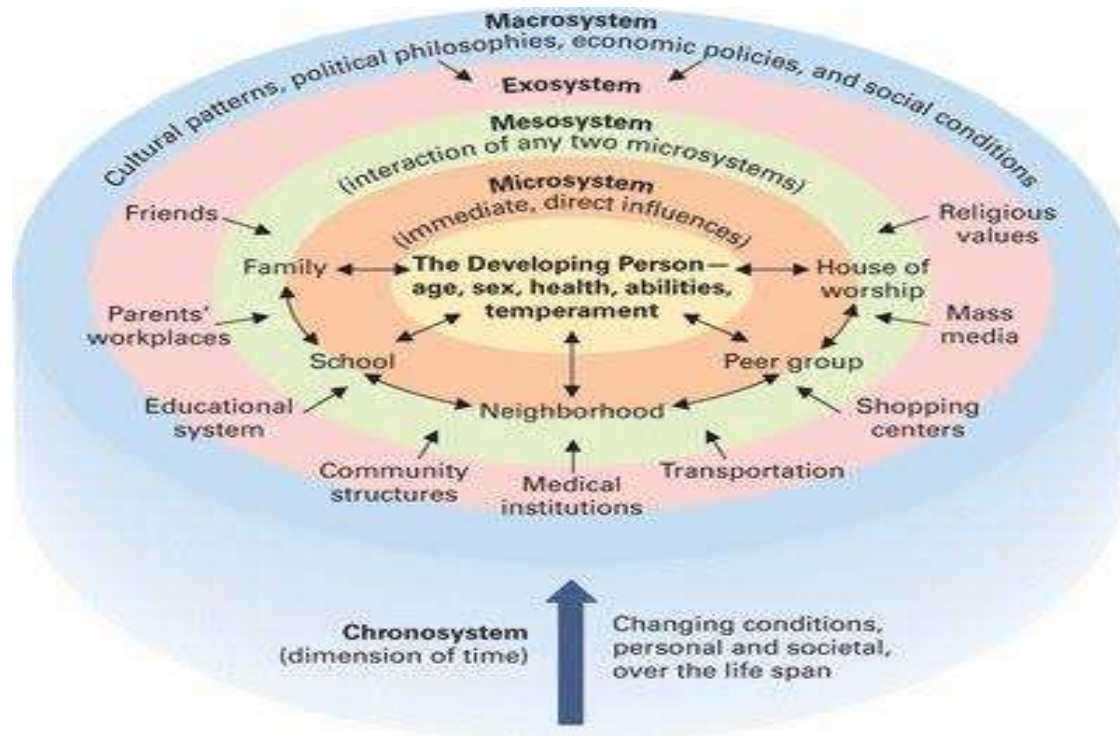
Fig. Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory

(Source: Santrock, J.W. 2008. Adolescence, Tata McGraw Hill Education Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, p.35)

c) **Children and their Childhood: The Contemporary realities with special focus on Bihar**

❖ The topic deals with developing an understanding on how the notion or realities of childhood is different in Bihar as compared to other states of our country.

❖ The realities can be discussed with reference to the following aspects-

• Socio-cultural perspectives of Bihar

• Underdeveloped status of the State

• Educational status

• Economic status

• Customs and traditions

• Family structure

• Value system

d) **Development of learner: physical, cognitive, language, social, and moral; their interrelationships and implications for teachers**

❖ We will discuss these issues with special reference to the Erickson's Psychosocial Theory, Piaget- Cognitive Development theory and Kohlberg's Theory of Moral Development.

❖ Erickson postulated that development of individual is the result of child's interaction with his social environment. Right from the child's birth, his social development puts him under specific pressures/ crisis by making specific demands at different ages/ developmental stages of his life. Erickson discovered eight such issues and linked them with the eight stages of one's psycho-social development.

Erickson Theory of Psycho-Social Development-

S.No	STAGES OF PSYCHO-SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT	AGE IN YEARS
1.	Trust vs Mistrust	0-1.5 years
2.	Autonomy vs Shame	1.5-03 years
3.	Initiative vs Guilt	03-06 years
4.	Industry vs Inferiority	06-12 years
5.	Identity vs Role Confusion	12-20 years (Adolescence)
6.	Intimacy vs Isolation	20-45 years (Early Adulthood)
7.	Generativity vs Stagnation	45-65 years (Middle Adulthood)
8.	Ego Integrity vs despair	65 years onwards (Later adulthood)

(Source: Mangal, S.K. 2007. Advanced Educational Psychology, PHI Pvt. Ltd. ,New Delhi)

Jean Piaget Theory of Cognitive Development-

❖ Jean Piaget postulated that cognitive development of children is the combined result of the development of brain and the nervous system, and of experiences that help him to adapt to his environment. Children follow a common stage wise pattern of cognitive development, presented as follows-

S.No	STAGES	AGE(Years)	COGNITIVE CHARACTERISTICS
1.	Sensori-motor Period	0-2 years	Reflex activity
	a. Sub-stage 1	0-1month	Self investigation
	b. Sub-stage 2	01-04 months	Coordination
	c. Sub-stage 3	04-08 months	Reaching out
	d. Sub-stage 4	08-12 months	Goal directed behaviour
	e. Sub-stage5	12-18 months	Experimentation
	f. Sub-stage 6	18-24 months	Mental combination, Problem solving

S.No	Stages	Age	Cognitive Characteristics
2.	Pre-Operational Period	02-07 years	
	a. Pre-conceptual	04-07 years	Emergence of symbolic functions, syncretic and transductive reasoning. Animism
	b. Intuitive	04-07 years	Egocentrism
3.	Concrete Operational Period	07-11 years	Logical operations applied to concrete problems, decentration, conservation, numeration, seriation
4.	Formal Operational Period	11 + years through adulthood	Hypothetico-deductive thinking, abstract thinking, reasoning skills

(Source: Sinha et al. 2008.Towards Understanding the Indian College students: A Psycho-social Perspective, MES 103 (1), PGDHE, IGNOU)

Kohlberg's Six Stages of Moral Development Theory-

Level 1- The Preconventional Level (04-10 years)-

At this level, morality is externally controlled. Behaviours that result in punishment are viewed as bad, those that lead to rewards as good.

       stage 1: The stage of obedience for avoiding punishment

       stage 2: The Instrumental purpose Orientation

Level 2- The Conventional Level (10-13 years)

Individual regard conformity to social rules as important but not for self-interest, rather they believe that maintaining current social system ensures positive human relationship.

       stage 3 : The 'good boy-good girl" orientation

       stage 4 : The social order maintaining orientation

Level 3 - The Post conventional or Principled level (13 years onwards)

Individual define morality in terms of abstract principles and values that apply to all situation and societies.

       stage 5 : The social –contract orientation

       stage 6 : The universal ethical principle orientation

Theories of Language Development-

❖ Linguist Noam Chomsky, 1957 proposed a nativist theory that regards language as a uniquely human accomplishment, etched into the structure of the brain. He said that all children have a Language Acquisition device (LAD)- an innate system that permits them, once they have acquired sufficient vocabulary, to combine words into grammatically consistent and to understand the meaning of the sentences they hear.

❖ Lev Vygotsky's Socio-cultural theory also emphasizes language as cultural capital inherent in the development of the learner.

Implications for Teachers :

❖ The knowledge regarding development of learners as well as the different dimensions of development along with their interrelationship has great educational implications especially for the teachers-

• Provides a suitable framework of the learning experiences in view of the cognitive development of children and needs of the society;

• Provides valuable information on curriculum planning and structuring the scheme of studies;

• Emphasizes the organization of learning experiences and learning environment for children;

• Awareness regarding the nature of the thought processes of the children at a particular level of maturation , etc.

SUGGESTED READINGS

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