

APPENDIX

Models/Theories of Early Childhood Education and Development

Froebel Educational Theory
The Head Start Program
The Portage Model
High/Scope Model
The Vygotskian Approach
Bank Street Model
The Project Approach
The Reggio Emilia Approach
The Waldorf Approach
Montessori Method
The Pyramid Method
Distar Model

These models, separately or in combination, fall within one of the conceptual categories below:

A. Behaviorist

Behaviorists focus on the way that the environment shapes an individual's behavior. Environmental operant conditioning uses reinforcement or punishment (associations on behavior) to shape or change the frequency of a behavior.

Positive reinforcement provides a desirable response (e.g., a reward) to encourage the repetition of a desirable behavior. Negative reinforcement ends an undesirable situation as a way of rewarding behavioral change (e.g., allowing a child to return to the group when a disruptive behavior stops). Punishment provides an undesirable consequence to discourage the repetition of a behavior.

Direct Instruction, in which the teacher presents a stimulus or situation and then reinforces correct responses, is the preferred teaching technique, accomplishing its goal through a series of incremental steps. Characteristics of this approach are: fast pace, narrow focus on task, emphasis on rote verbal responses, continual feedback and heavy demands for attention.

B. Maturationism

Maturationism is an early childhood educational philosophy that sees the child as a growing organism and believes that the role of education is to passively support this growth rather than actively fill the child with information. The educator reacts to, and adjusts to the child, in the belief that the child's development is largely predetermined, needing only time and minimal physical resources to unfold.

Maturationism is based on the idea that genetic factors play a larger role in the development of a child, than do environmental ones. The innate limits and skills of each child are emphasized, recognizing that children at different ages have different kinds of learning experiences.

C. Constructivism

Constructivism is based on the proposition that the child is an active participant in constructing reality and not just a passive recorder of it. Children learn through constructing their own understanding. All knowledge is constructed through a process of reflective abstraction. Cognitive structures, in a process of constant development within the learner, facilitate the process of learning.

The goal of Constructivist approaches is to foster conceptual development across all domains. The process of learning, particularly children's active involvement and interest, is more important than the acquisition of specific facts and skills. Autonomy and self-direction are highly valued. Constructivist techniques emphasize children's absolute freedom to experiment actively with materials in novel and personally meaningful ways. Child interest plays a prominent role in determining activities.