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AUTHOR Katz, Lilian G.
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ABSTRACT

Current understandings of children's development suggest that a pedagogy is appropriate for young children if: (1) it is largely informal in structure; (2) attends to children's dispositional and emotional development and development of knowledge and skills; (3) is mainly intellectual rather than academic in focus; (4) balances individual and cooperative group work on intellectually engaging tasks; and, (5) makes systematic instruction available to individual children as needed. In this document, the view of appropriate pedagogy just described is elaborated by discussions of three questions: (1) What should be learned? (2) When should it be learned? and (3) How is it best learned? The first question is discussed in terms of four types of learning goals: knowledge, skills, dispositions, and feelings. The second question is discussed in terms of the normative dimension of development and three subcategories of the dynamic dimension of development: ways in which human beings change; delayed impact of early experience; and long-term, cumulative effect of repeated or frequent experiences. The third question is discussed in terms of principles of pedagogical practice applicable to the four categories of learning goals and pedagogical principles generally applicable to most goals of early childhood programs. (RH)

Pedagogical Issues in Early Childhood Education

Lilian G. Katz, Ph. D.
Director,
ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary & Early Childhood Education
Professor of Early Childhood Education

University of Illinois
Urbana-Champaign

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Pedagogical Issues in Early Childhood Education

Introduction

> To confront a child with tasks for which he is not ready, with the implication that he should succeed, gives him a feeling of failure, undermines his security. Instead, we must guide him into those learning situations that he can attack effectively and with sufficient success to yield satisfaction, encouragement, and growth.
>
> CARLETON WASHBURNE (1939)

Washburne's admonition directed to elementary educators, is more than fifty years old! For more than twice that long the field of early childhood education is marked by unrelenting dissension concerning appropriate pedagogical practices. Lazerson points out that early in this century, controversy in the field raged over such issues as the relative emphasis on symbolism versus realism, the extent of free play versus teacher direction, and the nature and importance of creativity (Lazerson, 1972). In the 1930s Gardner attempted to put the continuing controversies to rest once and for all with a comparative study of two schools: School A characterized by practices known in the U.S. as "open" or "informal" methods, and School B, characterized by formal didactic methods of educating young children (Gardner, 1948). Despite findings in favor of School A, the debate resumed barely a generation later.

During the expansion of early childhood programs in the 1960s, Winsor noted that it was ironic to find the "very nursery movement which had its beginnings in progressive education described as 'traditional'" in contrast with the new academic curricula advocated

for compensatory early childhood education (1971). The advocates of formal didactic pedagogical practices in this period frequently implied that "traditional" nursery and kindergarten pedagogy was merely laissez-faire, offering little more than free play and some socialization experiences (Baldwin, 1965).

Since the 1960s, the issues in early childhood practices have been cast in terms of polar dimensions such as child- versus adult-centered, structured versus unstructured, didactic versus nondidactic, child- versus teacher-initiated, play versus instruction, socialization versus academics, and several variations of each (Powell, 1987). In actual implementation, these dimensions appear to overlap considerably. Powell points out that it is difficult to determine the extent to which content, activities, materials and teaching techniques are confounded in actual implementation and that "it is not possible to manipulate teaching technique without modifying program content"(Powell, 1987, p. 195).

A number of factors may account for the length and persistence of the debates over pedagogical practices in the field. It has often been noted that educational ideologies swing back and forth in pendulum fashion. A particular approach to early childhood education that is enthusiastically embraced at a given time is followed in a few years by a countermovement. This in turn is followed by over-corrections for the preceding swing, and then another zealous movement to correct previous over-corrections, ad infinitum! The curriculum developed by Bereiter and Engelmann (1966) in the 1960s

(now known as DISTAR) can be seen as an over-correction of their perception of the traditional preschool and kindergarten curriculum and its apparent ineffectiveness. However, a clear pattern of over-corrections of DISTAR is not apparent, though a reaction to DISTAR and other academic approaches to early childhood education may be reflected in current preoccupation with so-called developmentally appropriate curriculum practices.

Ideally dissension between rival schools of thought concerning early childhood pedagogical principles and practices could be settled by referring to pertinent empirical data. Although many studies bearing on the comparative effects of alternative practices have been reported in the last twenty years, their findings and conclusions are interpreted in many different ways (Elkind, 1988). Numerous measurement, methodological, and logistical problems are inherent in longitudinal studies of alternative approaches to early childhood pedagogy. Furthermore, a robust design for such comparative studies would almost certainly pose daunting ethical problems.

As we enter the last decade of the century, the controversy centers primarily on the accelerating "downward shift of what were next-grade expectations into lower grades" (Shepard & Smith, 1988, p. 136). Since next-grade expectations are typically academic and narrow rather than intellectual and open, their appropriateness for younger children has become a major issue for all who have a stake in early childhood education. Indeed, the controversy over the push-

down of the primary curriculum became sufficiently acute in the 1980s to prompt the largest membership association of early childhood practitioners, the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), to issue a substantial position statement against it in 1986, and to recommend a set of appropriate practices for children from birth up through the age of eight years in (See Bredekamp,1987).

The NAEYC Position Statement on appropriate curriculum for young children argues that practices are acceptable to the extent that they take into account what is known about children's development. The position taken assumes that such knowledge can provide a basis upon which curriculum and pedagogy appropriate to the age and maturity of both the group and the individual learners can be generated. However, the relationship between the body of knowledge called child development and pedagogical practices is not a simple or direct one (Spodek, 1986; Karweit, 1988; Katz & chard, 1989)). Indeed, it is difficult to determine just where knowledge and principles of child development fit into the processes of determining appropriate practices. The matter is further complicated by the fact that there are other criteria by which the appropriateness of pedagogical practices might be judged, namely: cultural, social, ethical, health, logistical or even financial criteria.

The number of factors that account for the actual nature of early childhood educational practices is potentially very large. It

seems reasonable to hypothesize that the major factors fall roughly into three large categories of factors. One is the body of knowledge and principles of child development. Another is the characteristics of the parents served, such as their goals, expectations, aspirations, and their understandings and preferences with respect to appropriate experiences for their children. A third category of factors includes what teachers are willing and, or able to do. Teachers may be willing to implement some practices, but for a variety of reasons may be unable to do so and vice versa.

[Insert Figure 1 about here]

The Venn Diagram in Figure 1 is a schematic representation of how the three categories of factors might intersect. It may be that in some situations none of the three categories intersect with each other, and in some only two of them (for example, child development knowledge and the teacher factors) do. Furthermore, the extent to which the categories intersect may vary greatly. Nevertheless, the goal of specialists in the field is to enlarge the area of overlap of all three of the categories as much as possible.

In the meantime, those in decision-making roles must proceed to plan and implement programs for young children in the absence of clear empirically-derived conclusions and guidelines. The aim of this chapter is to discuss the main issues that have to be addressed to determine the appropriateness of pedagogical practices,

and to suggest some principles applicable to the processes involved.

Identifying Appropriate Pedagogical Practices

In view of the long-standing tradition of diverse and competing approaches to pedagogy in the field, how can those responsible for planning and implementing programs for young children select the best one for their own communities? Is it the case that decision-makers are faced with either/or choices between opposing camps? Is a compromise or eclectic position that allows a community to have the best of all pedagogical worlds feasible? Is there an optimum mix of several approaches? Our effort to find responses to these questions begins with three interrelated questions:

1) What should be learned?
2) When should it be learned?
3) How is it best learned?

Responses to the first question provide the goals of the program for which pedagogical practices are to be adopted. The second question is the developmental one in that it draws upon what is known about the development of the learner. In other words, child development helps to address the when questions of program design. The third question turns specifically to matters of appropriate pedagogy. It includes consideration of all aspects of the implementation of a program by which program goals can be achieved.

It is apparent that responses to one of the three questions are inextricably linked to responses to the other two. Thus what should be learned and how it is best learned depends on when the learning it is to occur. Similarly, how something is learned depends upon what it is learned and on the developmental characteristics of the learner. For example, virtually all stakeholders in early childhood education would place literacy high on the list of answers to the question "What should be learned?" However, these stakeholders are likely to diverge considerably on the question of when and how the knowledge and skills should be learned. Terms like "emergent literacy" and "preliteracy" have recently appeared in the early childhood literature partly in order to address the confounding of the when and how questions. The confounding of the three questions is acknowledged; however, for the sake of discussion, they are taken up separately below.

WHAT SHOULD BE LEARNED?

The values and preferences of the clients served by the program would seem to have first claim among criteria for determining what should be learned. However, clients are rarely a homogeneous or monolithic with a clear consensus upon the goals of their children's education. Divergent answers to the question of what should be learned are as likely to be offered within school boards, parent groups and school faculties, as between them. Furthermore, since the answers are based on values, ideals, and assumptions about the future needs of the learners, they cannot be determined empirically.

Thus the answers inevitably become the subject of dispute (Clark, 1988). While the community's and clients' preferences determine the goals, the special expertise of professional educators should be brought to bear on addressing the questions of when and how the goals can best be implemented.

Four Types of Learning Goals

Whatever learning objectives are identified by clients and educators, they are all likely to fit into each of four types of learning goals: knowledge, skills, dispositions, and feelings, defined as follows:

1. Knowledge during the preschool period can be broadly defined as ideas, concepts, schemas, facts, information, stories, myths, songs, and other such contents of mind that come under the heading of what is to be learned. Three Piagetian categories of knowledge - social, physical and logico-mathematical - are often used in discussions of the knowledge goals in the early childhood education (Williams & Kamii, 1986)

2. Skills are defined as small, discrete and relatively brief units of behavior that are easily observed or inferred from behavior, (e.g. cutting, drawing, counting a group of objects, making friends and solving problems are all skills)

3. Dispositions are broadly defined as relatively enduring "habits of mind," or characteristic ways of responding to experience across types of situations, e.g. persistence at a task, curiosity, generosity, and meanness and the disposition to read or to solve problems. Unlike an item of knowledge or a skill, a disposition is not an end state to be mastered once and for all. It is a trend or consistent pattern of behavior and its possession is established only if its manifestation is observed repeatedly.

4. Feelings are subjective emotional or affective states, e.g. feelings of belonging, self-esteem, confidence, adequacy and inadequacy, competence and incompetence, and so forth. Feelings about significant phenomena may vary from being transitory to enduring, intense to weak or ambivalent. In early childhood education attitudes and values can also be included in this category. In education for older children they merit separate categories.

In principle, pedagogical practices are appropriate if they address all four categories of learning goals equally and simultaneously. Pedagogical practices that emphasize the acquisition of knowledge and the mastery of skills without ensuring that the dispositions to use the knowledge and skills so learned are also strengthened are not appropriate. If the desired knowledge and skills are mastered in such a way that feelings of distaste for their use or for the school environment accumulate throughout the

learning process, then the pedagogy may be judged inappropriate. Similarly, if a pedagogical approach succeeds in generating feelings of joy, pleasure, amusement or excitement, but fails to bring about the acquisition of desired knowledge and skills, The approach cannot be judged appropriate.

Most stakeholders in early childhood education are likely to agree on broad goals in all four categories of learning. For example, most state and school district kindergarten curriculum guides list as goals knowledge and skills related to literacy and numeracy, various items of cultural knowledge, and dispositions like the "desire to learn," creativity, cooperativeness, and so forth. The list of goals related to feelings usually includes "positive feelings about themselves," or "self-confidence" (See for example State of Iowa, 1983; Connecticut State Board of Education, 1988; Oklahoma State Department of Education, 1986; Roberts, 1989) Once the knowledge, skills, dispositions and feelings to be learned have been agreed on, the next question is When should they be learned?

WHEN ARE KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, DISPOSITIONS AND FEELINGS BEST LEARNED?

In the introductory chapter of the 38th yearbook in this series, published more than fifty years ago which was titled Child Development and the Curriculum, Carleton Washburne states that:

> ...before education can be really effective we must understand child nature. We must know better than we now do what the developing organism is reaching out for at each successive state. We must know much more than we now do about the experiences, knowledge, and concepts of the child at each level of

> development. We must learn how to measure at successive levels the child's capacity for adding to his experiences and interpreting them. We must measure the assimilability of new experiences to which the developing organism is to be exposed. At present we are in the first crude beginnings of this stage of scientific approach to our problem(Washburne,1939, p. 3).

In the fifty years since Washburne's observation, much has been learned about children's development that can help to address the issues in early childhood pedagogy. Indeed, early childhood education has traditionally drawn heavily on studies of children's development. The study of development is typically a major component of early childhood teacher preparation. It is widely assumed that mastery of the knowledge and principles of child development can form a basis for pedagogical decisions most likely to enhance growth and learning and to minimize potential harm to young children.

Typically, discussions of curriculum and pedagogical practices use the concept of development to refer to what is known about the normal characteristics of children at each age. Many curriculum guides, for instance, include sections describing typical characteristics of four-year-olds, five-year-olds,and so forth. However, characteristics of children at particular ages are only one aspect of their development - the normative aspect. The concept of development can be seen as having two distinctive but related dimensions, the normative and the dynamic, each of which should be taken into account when one decides what and how children should learn. Each dimension is briefly defined below.

ormative Dimension of Development

Common use of the concept of development draws on the normative dimension. This dimension addresses matters such as what most children can and cannot do at a given age or stage; for example, what is typical and what is most frequently observed in children at two and three and five and nine years of age. We apply the normative dimension when we discuss how many words most children know at a particular age, and the average age at which they can be expected to take their first step, understand time, conserve volume, and so forth. When we say that an activity is developmentally appropriate, cite of grade level achievement, or apply Gesell-type measures to children's behavior, we employ the normative dimension of the concept of development.

Dynamic Dimension of Development

The other major dimension is the dynamic one. Rather than compare behaviors among a group of children of the same age, the dynamic dimension addresses growth within individuals through time. While the normative dimension deals with aspects of development that are thought to be universal, the dynamic dimension focusses on the unique, or idiosyncratic patterns of development of the individual.

The dynamic dimension can be further analyzed into three interrelated sub-categories. One deals with the ways in which individual human being change over time and with experience. This

sub-category addresses the sequence of learning, the transformations that occur in capabilities from one age or time period to another, and the order in which the stages of development and learning occur. Thus some specialists study the progressive, sequential changes, stages or transitions involved in going from babbling babyhood to becoming a competent speaker of a language by age four or five.

Another sub-category of the dynamic dimension of development is delayed impact. This concerns the way early experience may affect later functioning, particularly with respect to affective and personality development. This sub-category addresses the determinants of behavior that may be unconscious and are caused by early experiences no longer easily accessible to conscious attention. It is this aspect of development that leads to widespread concern among early childhood specialists about whether early separation of an infant from its mother may have a delayed impact on later mental health. Delayed impacts may be both positive or negative. For example, either a new parent's loving or abusive behavior toward his or her infant may be the result of delayed impacts of the parents' own very early experiences which are no longer recalled.

A third sub-category of the dynamic dimension is the long-term cumulative effect of repeated or frequent experiences. An experience that might have no effect or a benign effect on a child's development if it occurs only once in a while may be harmful if it occurs repeatedly over a long period of time. A teacher might not

become concerned if the directions for completing school tasks confuse a child once in a while, but repeated confusion may have strong cumulative effects on the child's self-confidence and self-perceptions as a learner, and thus become a source of concern to the teacher. Likewise, occasional exposure to horror movies might not affect a child, but the cumulative effects of frequent exposure to them might cause long term deleterious effects.

In a similar way, an activity that seems to have little positive effect on a child's development if it occurs only occasionally may yield substantial cumulative benefits. For example, some parents and educators question the value of block play or dramatic play to a child's development. If this kind of play is available only occasionally, it may produce few if any positive effects; however, the cumulative effects of repeated opportunities to engage in such peer-interactive, open-ended, expressive, creative, child-governed activities as block play may be both positive and substantial.

Taking into account that development has both the normative and dynamic dimensions suggests that, in principle, just because children <u>can</u> do something does not mean that they <u>should</u>. The determination of what most children of a given age can do is a normative assessment; the determination of what a group of children should do depends on anticipated dynamic long-term consequences of an undertaking for each individual. For example, though it is likely that most young children can learn phonics at age four - a normative

assessment - it does not follow that they should do so. Judgment concerning instruction in phonics (or any other skill, for that matter) must be based on at least two considerations: the dynamic developmental trajectory of each individual in a group, and the potential long-term dynamic consequences of such a practice in terms of its possible cumulative effects. Individuals may vary with respect to their vulnerability to negative cumulative effects of a pedagogical practice that may be benign if experienced infrequently.

The distinction between what children can do and what they should do is especially serious in early childhood education because most young children are eager to please their teachers and appear to be willing to do almost anything they are asked to do, at least until the novelty of the activity wears off. However, children's willingness and enjoyment are potentially misleading criteria for judging the appropriateness of pedagogical practices. Instead, estimates of possible delayed impacts and cumulative effects of practices must be considered.

The two dimensions of development, and in particular the subcategories of the dynamic dimension - change, delayed impact, cumulative effects - provide a framework for consideration of the appropriateness of the learning goals derived from answering the question What should be learned? For example, extensive studies of young children from a normative perspective suggest that, in principle, pedagogical practices should address the issue of helping children to make better, deeper and more accurate sense of their

environments and experiences. As children increase in age and experience, it is the responsibility of educators to help them make better sense of the environments and experiences of those who are distant in time and place. Similarly, the current view of contemporary developmentalists concerning children's intellectual development suggests that, in principle, the younger the children are, the more likely they are to acquire knowledge if it is context or situation-bound (Brown, Collins and Duguid, 1989)

Piagetians have made the case that children's intellectual development progresses in fairly predictable and invariant sequences or stages. Thus both the normative and stage and sequence aspects of development deserve consideration in the selection of what knowledge children are to acquire in an early childhood program. Similarly, normative and stage and sequence considerations are appropriate when curriculum developers designate the skills to be included among the goals of a program.

When it comes to identifying the dispositions and feelings to be fostered or avoided by a pedagogical approach, the other two sub-categories of the dynamic dimension - delayed impacts and cumulative effects - merit consideration. For example, it may be that the introduction of formal instruction in phonics at age four or five may be acceptable on normative grounds, but when considering the time in the child's life, and the amount of instruction likely to be required when beginning phonics instruction that early, the potential delayed or cumulative effects - positive or negative - of

including formal instruction in phonics must be considered. Opponents of such a practice argue that even if the knowledge and skill involved in reading are acquired, the cumulative effects of an early start in reading may be damage the disposition to read engender negative and undesirable feelings about literacy and literature (e.g. boredom or dislike). Advocates of early reading instruction, on the other hand, assert that postponing the introduction of reading instruction unnecessarily deprives the learner of whatever knowledge and experiences can be acquired through reading (Carnine, Carnine, Karp & Weisberg, 1988).

In principle, then, an appropriate pedagogy is one that takes into account the acquisition of knowledge and skills in such a way that the disposition to use knowledge and skills and positive feelings towards about their use are also strengthened. Some might argue that, given the vulnerability of children, the younger the child, the more consideration should be given to goals in the disposition and feelings categories of learning. However, because neither of these two types of learning can be addressed directly, but are by-products of interactions involving the other two categories, they cannot easily be given priority in curriculum planning. It is reasonable to assume that dispositions and feelings are always being strengthened or weakened, either intentionally or by default. They do not wait upon particular lessons or instructions.

HOW ARE KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, DISPOSTIONS, AND FEELINGS BEST LEARNED?

This question takes us directly to matters of pedagogy; such matters include consideration of teaching methods, activities materials, and all other practical matters that are designed to achieve the learning goals and take into account what is known about learners' development. Thus, answers to the what and when questions are blended to yield principles of practice that constitute a general pedagogical approach to early childhood education.

Learning in the four categories which constitute the goals is facilitated in different ways. In the case of knowledge and skills, learning can be aided by instruction and by other processes. But dispositions and feelings cannot be learned from direct instruction. Dispositions appear to be acquired from models, to be strengthened by being manifested and appreciated, or weakened when not acknowledged or effective.

Feelings related to learning experiences are likely to be learned as a by-product of experiences rather than from instruction. Both dispositions and feelings can be thought of as somewhat incidental learnings in that they are incidental to the processes by which knowledge and skills are acquired. To label feelings as incidental is not to belittle them, or to devalue the role of the pedagogue in their development, rather it is to emphasize that feelings cannot be taught didactically. Children cannot be

instructed in what feelings to have!

We consider first the principles of pedagogical practice applicable to each of the four categories of learning goals and follow with a discussion of pedagogical principles that are generally applicable to most goals of an early childhood program.

Principles related to the acquisition of knowledge

Recent insights into children's development suggest that, in principle, the younger the child, the more readily the child acquires knowledge through active and interactive processes. Conversely, with increasing age children become more able to profit from reactive, passive and receptive instructional processes. That is to say that pedagogical practices are developmentally appropriate when the knowledge to be acquired is relatively easily accessible through the child's first-hand, direct experiences and when the knowledge is accessible from primary sources (Brice-Heath, 1987). This is not to say that children do not acquire knowledge and information from secondary sources like stories, books, film and television. The extent to which they do so is related to whether young children can connect the materials in the secondary sources to the images and knowledge they possess (Egan, 1986). With increasing age and experience, children become more able to profit from second-hand, indirect experiences and secondary sources such as textbooks (Carnine, et al. 1988). This principle is consistent with the concept of "situated cognition" that has recently been proposed to

account for the nature of learning at all ages. As Brown, Collins and Duguid explain:

> To explore the idea that concepts are both situated and progressively developed through activity, we should abandon any notion that they are abstract, self-contained entities. Instead, it may be more useful to consider conceptual knowledge as, in some ways, similar to a set of tools. Tools...can only be interpreted in the context of their use (Brown, Collins & Duguid, 1989. p. 33)

Thus, pedagogical practices are appropriate if they provide young children with ample opportunity to interact with adults and children who are like and unlike themselves; with materials; and with real objects and real environments.

However, interactions cannot occur in a vacuum; interactions have to be about something. In other words, interactions have to have content. What criteria can be used to determine the content or knowledge that is appropriate for young children? For example, should young children spend up to ten minutes a day in a calendar exercise? Should young children in southern Florida be making snowflake crystals out of styrofoam in January? Should substantial proportions of time be allocated to observance of public holidays and festivals. Why? And why not? What factors, data or other matters should be taken into account in answering these questions? One way to approach these questions is to derive principles of practice from what is known about the nature of children's development.

In principle, the content of interaction should be related to matters of actual or potential interest to the children served by the program. Since not all of children's interests are equally

worthwhile, some selection of which interests are the most deserving of promotion is required. Current views of children's learning and active construction of knowledge suggests that those interests most likely to extend, deepen and improve children's understandings of their environments and experiences are most worth strengthening.

Child development data also suggest that, in principle, the younger the learner, the more integrated the curriculum should be. Conversely, as children increase in age and experience, their capacity to profit from subject- or discipline-based study increases. Young children do not differentiate their ideas, thoughts and interests into categories such as science, language, and math. Rather, they are more likely to gain knowledge and understanding by pursuing a topic to which scientific, linguistic, mathematical and other discipline-related concepts can be applied.

Principles related to the acquisition of skills

Skills can be acquired and strengthened through a variety of processes: observation, imitation, trial and error, coaching, instruction, and optimum (vs. maximum) drill and practice. Contemporary views of the nature of learning also suggest that intellectual skills, like physical and social skills, are best learned when they occur in a meaningful situation (Brown, Collins and Duguid, 1989). In principle, the younger the child, the more likely it is that the child's skillfullness will be strengthened by application in meaningful contexts (Resnick, 1987). As children

increase in age and experience, and are more able to grasp the relationship between skillfullness and drill they can more easily understand and accept the need for practice and exercise of disembedded or decontextualized skills - even if they do so reluctantly.

Principles related to both knowledge and skills

Contemporary understanding of children's intellectual development suggest that, in principle, the younger the children, the more important it is that what they are to learn about (knowledge) and learn to do (skills) has horizontal rather than vertical relevance. Vertical relevance is that which prepares the pupils for the next school experience rather than for the one in which it is occurring; it is a type of 'education for the next life.' Horizontal relevance means that what the children are learning about and learning to do is applicable and meaningful to them on the same day they learn it, on the way home, and in their contemporary lives outside of the educational setting. As children increase in age and experience, they become more able to acquire knowledge and skills that have no immediate application or meaning for them.

Social Competence. Contemporary research suggests that the first six or seven years of development are a critical period in the development of social competence, and that failure to achieve at least a minimum level of peer interactive competence can have long

term negative consequences (Parker & Asher, 1987) Social competence requires such social knowledge as understanding others' points of view and feelings, and such skills as turn-taking, negotiating, approaching and entering strategies, and many others. Data from child development research suggests that, in principle, an appropriate pedagogy for young children is one that provides ample opportunity for them to be engaged in activities in which cooperation and coordination of effort is functional and consequential.

Strengthening desirable dispositions

The goals of most early childhood programs invariably include dispositional outcomes. Among the goals are: intellectual curiosity, cooperativeness, creativity, eagerness to approach and solve problems, and other such desirable dispositions. The assumption underlying these desired outcomes is that mastery of knowledge and skills must be accompanied by robust dispositions to employ them.

As suggested earlier, dispositions cannot be taught directly. Children's dispositions appear to be learned or strengthened to the extent that children observe the dispositions in significant models, that children have opportunity to manifest the dispositions, and that their manifestations are appreciated rather than rewarded. This suggests that learners must be able to observe desirable dispositions in the adults around them. It also implies that, in principle, if dispositions are to be strengthened, ample opportunity

for their exercise must be available. For example, if children's dispositions to be problem-solvers are to be strengthened, they must have real and meaningful problems to solve in the course of their daily activities.

A distinction is drawn here between rewarding and appreciating a dispositional behavior. These two types of responses to children's behavior probably overlap. They differ more in manner and in what they communicate to the children than in actual form or content. For example, if a teacher follows up on a question raised by a child a earlier by saying something like "Remember when you asked about X? I found out that it is such-and-such and found a book about it too..." In this example, the teacher's comment is positive and appreciative, but does not distract the child from his original interest. By contrast, research in child development indicates that rewards tend to distract children from the content of the problem at hand. After all, rewards can only work if children are aware of them (Resnick, 1987; Palincsar, 1989)! The appreciative teacher response also provides children with a model of the disposition to look things up and pursue a topic. Given the cumulative negative effects of rewards on children's dispositions related to learning, a pedagogy is appropriate if it emphasizes strengthening intrinsic motivation through expressing appreciation of children's efforts and by encouraging children to evaluate their own work.

Contemporary research on children's dispositions to learn indicates that excessive emphasis on skilled performance on academic

tasks has cumulative negative effects on children's mastery, effort and challenge-seeking behavior (Katz & Chard, 1989) The findings of the research in this area suggest that, in principle, pedagogical practices that emphasize child-initiated learning tasks are more likely to strengthen the desired dispositions than pedagogies that place low emphasis on child-initiated activities.

Feelings related to school experiences

One of the most typical learning goals found in curriculum guides is that children should learn to feel good about themselves. Others include feelings of confidence, competence, and acceptance by others.

Like dispositions, feelings cannot be taught directly; they are experienced and strengthened in the context of the ongoing relationships and activities that give rise to them. One of the points in the dispute over developmentally appropriate practices is that when a curriculum is focussed on a narrow range of academic tasks (e.g., workbooks, lessons in phonics, etc.) a substantial proportion of the learners is likely to be unable to respond to the work effectively. Indeed, there is some evidence to suggest that when a single instructional approach is employed with any group of children that are diverse in background, ability and development, about one third is likely to feel left out and develop feelings of incompetence or inadequacy (Katz and Chard, 1989) Thus, in principle, a pedagogical approach is appropriate if it includes a

variety of teaching methods and makes a wide range of activities available to the children (Katz, Raths & Torres, 1987.)

General Development and Appropriate Pedagogy

Current understandings of development suggest that, in principle, the younger the learner, the larger the proportion of time that should be allocated to informal activities. However, there are at least three kinds of informal activities: spontaneous play, arts and crafts activities, and cooperative work on extended group investigations or similar exploratory and constructive projects. Some time can also be allocated to varieties of activities related to music and literature which may occur in small or whole group teacher guided activities.

Based on current research on children's learning, it is reasonable to assume that between twenty and thirty percent of all children will need some systematic help from an adult if they are to learn some of the skills among the goals in the first few years of schooling. However, there is a distinction between systematic individual instruction and direct instruction, at least as the term is commonly used (See for example, Pinnel, DeFord & Lyons, 1988). Systematic instruction is typically given to an individual, and sometimes a pair or trio, and is planned by a teacher based on extensive observation and analysis of the learner's particular needs. It can be provided in the classroom, and minimizes the stigma and logistical problems associated with pull-out programs. The

individual instruction that some children require from time to time can be offered while others are engaged in spontaneous play or busy with cooperative and individual work on worthwhile topics.

Summary

The main argument in this chapter is that the process of formulating an appropriate pedagogy for young children requires the joint consideration what young children should learn, and of when and how they should learn it. Current research related to these issues suggests that an appropriate pedagogy for young children should be largely informal in structure, and should attend to the dispositional and emotional development as well as knowledge and skill acquisition of children. A pedagogy is also appropriate if it is primarily intellectual rather than academic in focus; if it provides a balance of opportunities for both individual and cooperative group work on intellectually engaging tasks; and if systematic instruction is available to individual children when they need it.

The pedagogical approach proposed here would bring pedagogical practices into line with what is known about young children's development and learning. A further challenge to early childhood educators is to bring parents' understandings, expectations, and preferences into closer agreement with these recommended practices.

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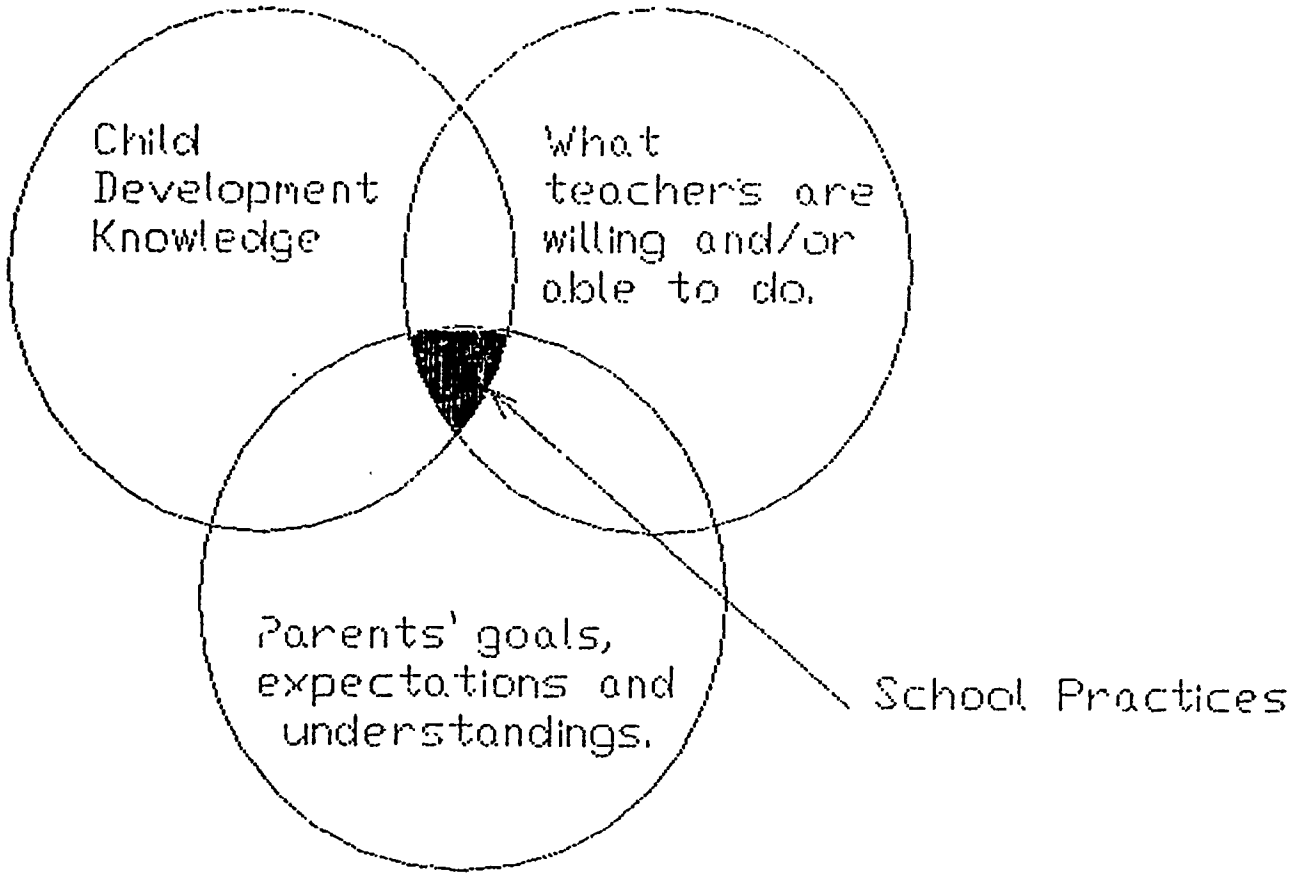

Schematic representation of major factors that account for school practices.

L. G. Katz
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