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Child Education Strategies based on Erikson's Theory

Ruby Jiang [1, a, *], Meiying Wu [2, b]

[1] Department of Psychology, School of Educational Science, Hunan Normal University, Changsha 410081, China
[2] Education, Monash University. vic, Australia

[a, *] RubyJiang@hunnu.edu.cn, [b] Wmy18799642131@163.com

*** Corresponding author:** Ruby Jiang (Email: RubyJiang@hunnu.edu.cn)

Abstract: Erikson's theory of life cycle development is a stage-based view of human life. According to this theory, people go through eight stages in their lives, each involving specific developmental tasks and crises. For each stage, the crisis experienced by individuals is not catastrophic but rather a turning point where their vulnerability increases or potential is enhanced. If individuals can successfully resolve each crisis, then they will have a healthier psychological state. Each stage has a positive and negative side. Erikson's theory of life cycle development provides a framework that can help us understand the challenges people face at different stages and how to deal with them. Understanding these stages can help teachers better understand children and how to better support their development.

Keywords: Erikson's Theory of Life Cycle Development; Individual Development.

1. Erikson's Theory of Life Cycle Development

In addition to Brownfenbrenner's analysis of the social context of child development and significant people in their lives, Erik Erikson (1902-1994) proposed a stage-based view of human life development. Let's take a look at Erikson's views on the stages of human development (Kakar, 1968).

2. Eight Stages of Human Development

In Erikson's (1968) theory, people go through eight stages of development in their lives. Each stage includes a developmental task that puts the individual in crisis. For Erikson, each crisis is not catastrophic but rather a turning point where vulnerability increases or potential is enhanced. The more successfully a person solves each crisis, the healthier their psyche. And each stage has a positive and negative side.

Trust vs. Mistrust

This is Erikson's first psychosocial stage. It occurs from birth to one year old. The development of trust requires warm and caring care. The positive outcome is a feeling of comfort and little fear. When a baby is mistreated or neglected, mistrust arises.

Autonomy vs. Shame and Doubt

This is Erikson's second psychosocial stage. It occurs in late infancy and toddlerhood. After gaining trust from caregivers, babies begin to discover that their actions are their own. They insist on their independence and the ability to achieve their own wishes. If infants are restricted too much or punished too harshly, they will develop feelings of shame and doubt.

Initiative vs. Guilt

This is Erikson's third psychosocial stage. It corresponds to the preschool years, approximately 3 to 5 years old. When young children experience an expanding social environment, they face more challenges than in infancy. To cope with these challenges, they need to take active, purposeful action. If children are irresponsible or pressured too much, they will develop uncomfortable feelings of guilt (Hamman & Hendricks, 2005).

Industry vs. Inferiority

This is Erikson's fourth psychosocial stage. It corresponds roughly to the elementary school years, from age 6 to early adolescence. As children enter elementary school, they focus their energies on mastering knowledge and intellectual skills. The danger during the elementary school years is to develop a sense of inferiority and incompetence (Erikson, 1968).

Identity vs. Role Confusion

This is Erikson's fifth psychosocial stage. It corresponds to the adolescent years. Adolescents try to discover who they are, what they are, and where they want to go in life. They face many new roles and adult identities (such as professionals and lovers). Adolescents need to be allowed to explore different roles in different ways to achieve a healthy identity. If adolescents do not explore different roles sufficiently or do not open up positive future paths, they may be confused about their identities. (Erikson, 1968)

Intimacy vs. Isolation

This is Erikson's sixth psychosocial stage. It corresponds to early adulthood, from the twenties to the thirties. The developmental task is to form positive intimate relationships with others, such as close friendships and romantic relationships. Those who are successful in this stage are able to form long-lasting, meaningful relationships with others. Those who struggle to form these relationships may feel isolated and lonely (Erikson, 1968; Sackman et al., 1968).

Generativity vs. Stagnation

This is Erikson's seventh psychosocial stage. It occurs in middle adulthood, from the forties to the sixties. The developmental task is to make contributions to society and future generations, such as through work or raising children. Those who are successful in this stage feel a sense of accomplishment and fulfillment, while those who are unable to contribute may feel stagnant and unfulfilled (Rogers, 2018; Saracho, 2023; Erikson, 1968).

Integrity vs. Despair

This is Erikson's eighth and final psychosocial stage. It occurs in late adulthood, from the seventies until death. The developmental task is to look back on one's life and reflect on whether they have lived a fulfilling life with few regrets.

Those who are successful in this stage feel a sense of integrity and wisdom, while those who have many regrets may experience feelings of despair (Erikson, 1968).

3. Applying Erikson's Theory in Child Education

Erikson's theory of life cycle development can be applied in child education to help teachers better understand the challenges children face at different stages and how to support their development. For example, teachers can use Erikson's theory to guide their interactions with young children and provide them with opportunities to develop trust, autonomy, and initiative in a safe environment (Okunev, 2022). Teachers can also encourage children to explore and take on new challenges, while providing support and encouragement to prevent feelings of inferiority and incompetence (McGaw et al., 2022).

For older children and adolescents, teachers can help them explore different roles and identities through activities that encourage self-discovery and self-expression. Teachers can also provide guidance on forming positive relationships with others and help them develop a sense of purpose and contribution to society (Archer, 1985).

In conclusion, Erikson's theory of life cycle development provides a useful framework for understanding individual development and the challenges people face at different stages of their lives. Understanding these stages can help teachers design educational interventions that support children's development and help them navigate the challenges they encounter along the way (Erikson, 1968; Sokol, 2009).

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