
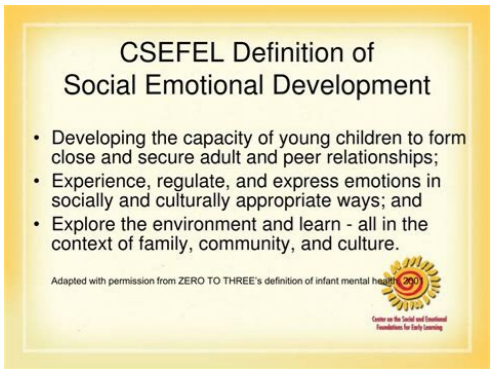


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CHAPTER 7

**EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT AND
RELATIONAL PEDAGOGY**

INTRODUCTION

The notion of relational pedagogy within early childhood development is at the heart of this chapter. More specifically, the place of dialogue and dialogic space within relational pedagogy is developed with reference to a South African case. In previous chapters I explored dialogue and pedagogy in the context of access to higher education for students from poor educational backgrounds. My particular interest in this chapter is at the other end of the formal education continuum: a community-based pedagogy for poor and vulnerable young children who do not have access to early education-centres.

Although there has been some attention to relational pedagogy within early childhood education (see Papatheodorou, 2006, 2009), and a body of scholarship on dialogic pedagogy related to early education (Marjanovic-Shane, 2011; White, 2013, 2014), the two have not been substantially linked. I present the argument here that relationality is a key aspect of a dialogic approach to teaching and learning, especially (but not only) among young children. It is difficult to conceive of early learning outside of the context of relationships with others. Children are geared to learn from and with others. For example, they are neurologically predisposed to listen and respond to others as they learn their home language, and this interaction creates the neural pathways that enable them to master the language (Wegerif, 2013). Relationality thus provides an integrated neurological (synaptic links between neurons) and social (connections between people) basis for understanding learning. Extending this relational understanding of learning to early childhood education, one can see that relations among teacher, child and care-giver provide a basis for a productive relation between the home and school environments.

The chapter begins by outlining the organizational, socio-economic and policy contexts of the research. It then provides a conceptual framework, drawing on notions of relational pedagogy, dialogue and dialogic space. These ideas frame the chapter's exploration of pedagogic practices within the *Siyabathanda Abantwana* programme.

CONTEXT OF RESEARCH

The *Siyabathanda Abantwana* (isiZulu for "We cherish the children") Programme is run by Little Elephant Training Centre for Early Education (LETCEE) in partnership with the community of Matimatolo. LETCEE is an NGO based in Greytown, a small town in the KwaZulu-Natal Midlands. This inland area of the province lies between the coastal belt and the Drakensberg highlands. It is characterised by commercial agriculture, principally forestry, sugar cane, cattle and dairy farming, small towns

MEANING

According to SORENSON....

“By social growth and development we mean increasing ability to get along well with oneself and others.”

According to MRS. HURLOCK.....

“Social development means the attaining of maturity in social relationships.”

Elements of Socialization

- socialization is the process that prepares humans to function in social life
- socialization is culturally relative - people in different cultures and people that occupy different racial, classed, gendered, sexual, and religious social locations are socialized differently
- Goals of Socialization
 - impulse control and the development of a conscience
 - role preparation and performance, including occupational roles, gender roles, and roles in institutions such as marriage and parenthood
 - the cultivation of sources of meaning, or what is important, valued, and to be lived for

relationships with family, friends, teachers, and other people in our lives. By investing in people we can reduce poverty. Prominent among these are areas relating to population policy, policy relating to urbanization, industrial location and environmental pollution, policies relating to regional development, policies of income growth, income distribution and land reform, policies governing administration and peoples' participation in planning and the implementation of plans". Without a decent place to live, it is difficult to function as a productive member of society. When businesses succeed, the economic situation of a community is improved. Social development means investing in people. As we mature, we learn to better manage our own feelings and needs and to respond appropriately to the feelings and needs of others. Other investments in people that contribute to the economic prosperity of society include youth programs and services, post-secondary education, job creation, promotion of healthy, active living and safe and secure communities To reduce poverty we need to take a social development approach and invest in our people. Social development is about improving the well-being of every individual in society so they can reach their full potential. The success of society is linked to the well-being of each and every citizen. Some other definitions of social development is described below: M.S.Gore-"The concept of social development is inclusive of economic development but differ from it in the sense that it emphasis the development of totality of society in its economic, political, social and cultural aspects. An investment today in good child care programs can provide many long term economic benefits for society. Learning must start early in life. Social development can be effected by a child's personality, the opportunities they have for social interaction, behaviors learned from parents, and developmental disorders. Moreover, social development philosophy assumes that a substantial investment is required for social services for which economic development is essential." Thus, social development is a comprehensive concept which implies major structural changes political, economic, cultural and its goal is to create a new society in place of the present where living condition of the people are improved so that they do not suffer from hunger and they are not denied the basic necessities of life. It requires the removal of barriers so that all citizens can journey toward their dreams with confidence and dignity. We need to go beyond looking at government to find ways to develop our most valuable resources, our people. It is the focus of family life; where families can live safely, nurture their children, build community relationships and care for aging parents. For example, a child who has a short temper and who witnesses violence in the home may have trouble learning how to play well with other kids. If they are healthy, well educated and trained to enter the workforce and are able to make a decent wage they are better equipped to meet their basic needs and be successful. Shankar Pathak has explained this in detail ha says that "Social development includes programs for universal literacy or primary education, comprehensive preventive health, measure and control of contagious diseases, housing, family planning and preservation of ecological balance. In addition, a safe affordable place to live is very important in helping people achieve self-sufficiency. Every New Brunswicker must have the opportunity to grow, develop their own skills and contribute to their families and communities in a meaningful way. When people know that their children are being well taken care of, they can be more productive in their jobs. It is about helping people so they can move forward on their path to self-sufficiency. An affordable, high quality child care system is also needed for society to succeed. By investing in early learning initiatives, we can ensure a greater degree of success amongst our citizens.

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