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Analysis and Commentary paper

Introduction

The child I have chosen to focus on is Alexis. Alexis is 4-5 years old. She has black hair (tied up in a ponytail) with bangs, white skin tone, is wearing a two-button yellow shirt, a black skirt, and black socks with blue and black shoes. I have chosen to focus on Alexis for this analysis and commentary paper for many reasons. For starters I was intrigued on how fast her social and emotional competence shifted. Alexis knew what she wanted and how to get it. Taking a closer look at her actions made me want to dig deeper as to reasoning why. I was also impressed with her language at times. She had a sense of “me” and was able to express herself in a mature manor.

Developmental Skills, Processes and Milestones

Alexis has demonstrated several cognition skills and processes while playing with blocks and using the same space as a classmate. While Alexis lays down blocks in a straight line on the floor, she says “we can make this longer” as she continues to add blocks to the line. This indicates that she knows she need more blocks to add more length. In another cognitive sense, Alexis decided to let her teacher know that Cameron was messing up her blocks. Alexis saw the problem and looked for assistance. Alexis participates in use of objects and symbolic play. The block tower that Cameron and Alexis have contributed to is their building. Cameron says to

Alexis, "Don't go on the roof" as she takes some blocks off the tower and she responds "I'm not" indicating that she is going along with symbolic play alluding to their tower having a rooftop. Alexis has mastered the milestone of understanding the idea of counting (typically a child 4 years old). Alexis has demonstrated several receptive language skills and processes while engaging in conversation with the teacher. Alexis heard her name in conversation, responded to Cameron the way her teacher wanted her to (follows orders by teacher "tell him that Alexis"), and understood the conversation. Alexis has mastered the milestone of having sentence length of 4-5 words (4-5 years old). Alexis has demonstrated several expressive skills and processes while talking to her classmate and teacher. She uses sentences while communicating with her teacher at which she also uses words with meaning in letting her teacher know the issue at hand. She also uses words by themselves such as "here" when giving Cameron a block. Alexis has mastered the milestone of knowing some basic grammar such as using "he" and "she" correctly (4 years old). Alexis has demonstrated communication skills while interacting with teacher and Cameron. She can communicate to Cameron to stop touching her blocks as well as tell the teacher that Cameron is doing as such. Alexis also calls her teacher by name. Alexis says "he messin up my blocks", indicating that she has mastered the milestones of knowing and may misapply rules of grammar but also speaks clearly (typical 5 year old) Alexis has demonstrated emergent literacy skills and processes while playing with block and a lion animal figure. Alexis was aware of symbolic representation including the toy lion representing a family figure. Alexis can also comprehend sentences as well as form words. She has mastered the milestone of having a sentence with 4-5 words (4-5 years old). Alexis has demonstrated emotional self-regulation skills while in active play with Cameron her classmate.

Alexis was able to handle her emotions by simply going straight toward the center of the issue. She told Cameron that she did not like him messing up her blocks and told him to stop. She actively involved the teacher when she felt like she need help in that situation. She had control over her body in the way she moved and picked up the blocks. She has mastered the milestone of independently negotiating solutions to conflicts with other children (Age 4). Alexis has demonstrated many social skills including interactions with peers and adults. There were times when Alexis was involved with Cameron's play. She went along with Cameron's toy being a person (a dad figure, as Cameron says out loud "you're my son"), but then at times was more involved in her own independent play. This involved her calling the blocks her blocks "my blocks" as she would focus on them. She would tell him to stop touching her blocks then laugh at his actions. Towards the end of the observation, she seemed more open to his play. To mention the interaction with her teacher once again, she invited the teacher in for a solution when she saw she needed help. Alexis had mastered the milestones of showing more independence, being aware of gender, and pretend play with mom or dad. (Age 4) Alexis has demonstrated several fine motor skills and processes while creating a tower with blocks. Alexis used both her left and right hand to stack blocks on top of one another. She grasped the blocks noticeably more with her right hand and placed them in an order she felt right while holding a toy lion in her left hand. At first, she picked up the lion with her left hand then passed it to the right. Before creating her building she passed the toy lion from her right hand to the left in which she then used her right hand to stack. As she took blocks down from her tower with her left hand, she holds the block in her hand and then let's go of it and it falls on the floor next to her. She has mastered the milestone of using one hand consistently for fine motor tasks. Alexis

has also demonstrated many gross motor skills in the continuation of play with blocks and retrieving the toy lion. Alexis stands up from where she is sitting using her knees and legs to then take a few steps to the other side of the play area where she looks for the toy lion in the cubby. She then bends down using her knees to pick up the toy lion. She walks back to where she was sitting before then gets back on the ground with hands and knees to play with the lion. She has mastered the milestone of getting up and down in transitions from sitting to walking.

Developmental theories

Alexis is in the cognitive thinking preoperational stage. According to Piaget, children begin to organize the world of objects into categories based on attributes that they can perceive through their senses- color, shape, sound. Language is also a huge part of cognitive development. Children's language in the preoperational stage develops faster in which they give meaning to words and can communicate effectively. One of the principles of constructivist learning is that learning is an active process as well is social activity. Our connections with others influence our learning in many ways. Alexis learns and figures out which shapes go with each other in blocks to build. She also communicates with her teacher and classmate to get points across. She communicates effectively to her teacher and Cameron with a problem and solution in mind. Alexis is in the social- emotional development stage initiative vs. guilt (3-6 years old). According to Erik Erikson and his psychosocial theory of development, personal development involves initiate- a sense of ambition and responsibility. Alexis take on responsibility by calling the blocks hers. She has the ambition to continue playing with the blocks and by calling them hers she takes on the role that come with responsibility. Alexis knows what she wants to do and finds a way to do it. In Erikson's stage theory, maturation

brings new skills that open for new possibilities. Erikson described social and emotional maturation as the interactive adaptation of both the child and the societal structures of his or her cultural environment. Vygotsky believed that symbolic play is the leading factor in cognitive development in young children. Social experience shapes the individual's ways of thinking and interpreting the world. By Alexis using her blocks and toy lion in symbolic play as pretending one thing to be the next, she has the ability to separate thought from action and objects and the ability to act against immediate impulse. Urie Bronfenbrenner believes that development occurs progressively through more complex interactions between an active child and persons, objects, and symbols in their immediate environment. The child affects and will be affected by their environment. Alexis is in her classroom at school. At school she has opportunities for interactions with her peers and hands on exploring. As playing with Cameron, when her space was being interfered with she called for a new source of help (being an adult). Her environment shaped her actions. One of the language development theories that I connected with was Vygotsky's social cultural theory. Vygotsky considered communication the basic function of language in which we learn language through social interactions and our environment. Vygotsky's social cultural theory emphasizes the importance of the adult role. The teacher's role in Alexis scenario was to give her guidance on how to react and what to say in the situation of Cameron messing up her blocks.

Cultural influences on development

Culture can be known as the social behavior and norms that are shared by members of a social group. Through social interactions culture can be constructed. The environment and social interactions that we endure have many influences on our development. One aspect of culture

that has influenced my development would be family composition. Growing up I was always closer with my mother and sister more than my father. Physically I grew up with a family but mentally it felt like we were all separated. My parents would fight a lot and seeing and hearing their arguments at a young age showed me the different types of relationships people have in this world. Another aspect of culture set to influence my development would be ability and disability. Years back my mother fell at her job and was injured. From that point on she stayed home from work. Due to her being at home a lot, her and I got closer. I feel as if I can go to her for anything but never that way with my father. In relation to her being home, this is when gender roles come in to play a part on my development. My mother was expected to cook, clean, and take care of me and my sister while my father brought home the income. As a child it was my understanding that that were true for all men and women and those were their set contributions. As I got older, I realized that that was false, and roles can be switched. Going back to income, social class and education influences my development as well. Considering that I am middle class, at an early aged I realized the value of money and growing up would always watch my spending as would my parents. Both my parents went to college in which I was inspired to as well, another aspect of culture influencing my development is language. Me and my family speak English, but I am always around ones speaking Spanish in which I can understand and speak some myself. This shows that I have different options in which I can communicate with. The environment in which we are placed in shapes us in many ways. The aspect of culture including geographic region and neighborhood has influenced me in the sense of the people I am around and my lifestyle. I live in an urban area in which I am used to using public transportation such as the subway or bus. In my area I have access to many things very

quicky, including variations of stores. Moving on to Alexis, one aspect of culture that may have some influence on her development would be race. Alexis who is white is sharing the same space and toys with Cameron who is African American. Alexis is comfortable around Cameron which shows that she is familiar and open with other races. Another aspect of culture would be gender. Alexis who is female plays with Cameron who is a male. Interacting with children other than her own gender allows for different experiences to be upheld. Considering that she is aware of gender, she plays with Cameron no matter the sense of him being a boy or girl. Alexis's family's social class may also influence her development. Alexis seems to be dressed nice and appropriately. It seems as if she is comfortable in her situation based on how she comes to school. If a child's family were struggling in their financial situation it might be noticeable in her appearance. Alexis's family composition could also have much to do with her development. Alexis for the most part of the observation enjoys her play time and is shown smiling and laughing in which she is continuously active in play. If her parents are having issues with one another and it is noticeable in the child's eyes, Alexis for example might lash out at school in her behavior. We can conclude that Alexis family life is stable in which she is actively engaging at school.

Comparing development at different ages/ stages

In observing all three children and their development, it is noticeable that all three children can grasp objects with their hands. Jasmine picks up twigs, Alexis picks up blocks and a toy lion and Jack picks up the red ball with the wooden toy. All three children also release their objects. Jack releases the ball every time he puts it in the hole, Jasmine releases her twig from her right hand and Alexis releases the blocks as she removes them off the tower. Piaget states that

learning is an active process. Through each child's experience and play, they learn what works and what does not. Jack who is 9 months old explores the nature of the red ball sliding down a ramp through a hole. He is learning the nature of the toy as well as the elements surrounding it. He often moves the toy around on the floor to see what it will do. Jasmine who is 5 years old learns how to use many obstacles on the playground by physically involving herself with them. She learns how to make the twist pole go faster but using her leg and notices her physical strength when it comes to the monkey bars. Alexis interacts with blocks giving her experience in creating things for herself. She may learn what blocks go together and which do not. The difference in their development is in which Jack the infant can only make sounds to communicate but Alexis who is 4-5 years old and Jasmine who is 5, can use sentences with 4-5 words and can speak clearly. Another difference in development between all three children is their contribution to make-believe and symbolic play. Jack the toddler is not yet capable of initiating pretend scenarios but on the other hand Alexis and Jasmine use their imagination to make an object be something else. They both use objects to build what is something of their imagination. (Jasmine uses twigs as Alexis uses blocks).

Comparing how settings may influence behavior

The setting in which the toddler of 9 months old was observed is in an open area home living space. The setting involves a bookshelf in which there are 2 toys spaced out on the second to last shelf. On the bottom shelf there is a wooden block toy. Next to the bookshelf there is a toy wooden dresser with a wooden block containing drawers to put objects. Colors being red, blue and yellow for each draw. There is also a white wood table behind the child but in front of the camera view. The child sits in the middle of the surrounding furniture. To the left of the table

there is a purple rug. Objects and furniture were spaced out from one another. The setting in which Alexis the focus child was observed takes place inside a classroom and more specifically the block center. In this center, there is a carpet or rug on the floor and on it show pictures of cars, roads, houses, trees and what you would see from an everyday street view. Around the area are shelves with containers and blocks inside the cubby hole. The toy blocks seen are wooden, green, blue, yellow, and red and they each have their own section (or cubby). The blocks are stacked up in each of the cubbies. Across the block section is another shelf with containers of toy animals as well. The setting in which Jasmine the elementary child was observed takes place in a park / playground (Cuesta park in Mountain view, CA). On one side of the park there is a sand area which is big and open. In the sand there are buckets and other sand toys. It also features a turning pole in which the children can sit on the bottom stool and spin. On the side of the turning pole there is a small rock wall. On the other side of this area there is a playground with different climbing obstacles and different bar sets like your natural neighborhood playground. The settings of all three children are different in many ways. To start with, all children are all physically in a different space. The infant toddler Jack was placed in a home play area, Alexis the focus child in a classroom, and Jasmine the elementary school child in a park. The setting in which these children were placed influenced how they play. With Jasmine In the park, she has many options as to what to do and what obstacles to go on. Her choices are not as limited to a child in the classroom considering she is outside. Jasmine was also with her family at the park. She has options to play with her sister, father, and other family member. At the park there are also other children. This expands social interaction and views of the child. With Jack in a play area at home, he is limited to whatever play objects were in the

room. The area he is set in offers limited toys on a shelf in which some he cannot reach. Jack is also the only child in which he plays himself and focuses his attention on the red ball and wooden toy. The setting in which Alexis was placed in caused her to seek help from the teacher as Cameron the other classmate was interfering with her play set up. Because she was in the same play area as Cameron and sharing toys, they came across complications as to what was “theirs” and what they were sharing. Considering Alexis is in a classroom and playing with a peer, she had others to interact with as well as different play options. The settings in which all three children are placed are similar in which each setting allowed the child to engage in play and have fun. There was a moment where each child has a smile on their face and gave off some laughter. Each child in their observation also had moments of doubt or distress but quickly over came them.

Conclusion

After thinking about my experience as an observer, I have come to the conclusion that from observing you can truly learn so much from the simple actions of child. I have enjoyed my time as an observer as I got to explore children in their daily life experiencing and learning through play. I have learned that there is reasoning behind all actions and out active social and culture experiences create what is known as development as well as many other factors. This experience will guide me in my early childhood professional career in many ways. I am now more observant in ways I never thought I could be. I have learned the difference in being objective and descriptive to analytical. Being descriptive in your observations makes you aware

of things you would have never thought to notice. From these observations I have learned it is more about why you see it and the effect of action. All life factors make up our development and what better way to see that then through observation.