

Unit 14: Psychological Perspective.

Task 1: Debates in developmental psychology.

In developmental psychology there are 3 major debates that is common in childcare, these are; the Nature/ Nurture debate, the Continuity/ Discontinuity debate and the Nomothetic/ Ideographic debate.

The most common debate talked about is the Nature/ Nurture debate. This debate is where theorists such as Chomsky and Pavlov, have disagreed for many years at how children learn their behaviours.

For the Nature side of the argument, theorists like Chomsky believed that children were able to learn on their own, like the laissez-faire model of learning. They believed that we are the way we are because of our genes, therefore nature is innate.

Nurture is where theorists like Pavlov believed that children had to be taught how to behave through their parents or teachers. This was proved in his experiment with the dogs and the bell. Nurture is also described as society influence, and some even believe that children are a blank slate in which information is written on for the children to understand. An example of this debate put into place is the case study of Oxana M. She was a child brought up by dogs; therefore all her actions were dog like. This would agree with the nurture side of the argument, because it was who the child was with from an early age and the environment around her that caused this.

Another debate is the Continuity/ Discontinuity debate. Continuity is described as a smooth process in learning behaviour and is also continuous, or gradual. Discontinuity is where learning behaviour is a development of discreet stages, also that each person must accomplish one task before they can continue to the next stage. The theorists that agree with this debate are Piaget¹ and William R Atchley.

Finally, the last debate that is discussed by theorists is the Nomothetic and Idiographic debate. Nomothetic is described as comparing children's progress according to identified levels according to their origin and age and other factors. It is also described as the understanding of a change in personality with professional help; it also looks at whether we share essential characters of behaviour etc but with some differences to each of us.

The term Nomothetic comes from the Greek word 'nomos' meaning law. This is where the theorists would investigate the behaviour of children in groups, this is so they would be able to find the general law of behaviour that applies to everyone in the world. There are advantages and disadvantages to the nomothetic approach. The advantages of using this approach is; it is intone with the law abiding nature of science, it has been successfully in other areas of science other than psychology, it has been useful in controlling behaviour, for example dealing with global problems such as aggression and prejudice. However, with everything there must be their disadvantages, these are; not being able to give us a more superficial understanding of individual children, for example two children could be brought up the same way however, their friends could lead them in different directions. Also if the theorists are doing research and they say that 2% of children behave the same way as their parents the children would not know if they were in that 2% of children, therefore the generalisation of this approach may not be as accurate as the parents of the children would like to hear.

¹ <http://psych.colorado.edu/~colunga/P4684/piaget4.pdf>

The Idiographic approach is described as a unique assumption towards human beings and therefore can only be understood by applying techniques to their uniqueness. The term idiographic comes from the Greek word 'idos' meaning private or personal, therefore this approach is investigating the children's behaviour by watching them as individuals, in personal, in depth and in detail to have a unique understanding of them. Therefore, this approach focuses on the things that are different between children's behaviour and as to how they are different. As with the Nomothetic approach there are advantages and disadvantages towards the idiographic approach, these are:

Advantages; it can provide a more complete and global understanding of the child, it can be the most efficient approach in this area of study, of which Freud and Piaget agree with, it can be the only possible approach to use in studying this area such as trying to teach an animal how to behave.

Disadvantages; we can't legally generalise or apply any findings carried out from one child to other children- Freud and Piaget had been accused of creating global theories based on idiographic data, therefore limited, unrepresentative samples of participants. Another disadvantage to this approach is that it can be unreliable and unscientific; this is because they tend to be subjective, long term, flexible and unstandardised.²

² [www.ecgbert.sheffield.sch.uk/.../Debates%20\(ATr\)/The%20Ideographic%20vs.ppt](http://www.ecgbert.sheffield.sch.uk/.../Debates%20(ATr)/The%20Ideographic%20vs.ppt)