

Chapter Two: Literature Review

{Name}

{Institute Name}

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Introduction

This chapter is based upon several studies conducted and concluded in different territories of Canada about social emotional development of children. The purpose of this chapter is to report findings from studies focused on parents', educators' and teachers' roles in supporting children in their behavioral conducts.

I have quoted different researches, projects and studies that show the need of hour, that is to illuminate our growing generation's minds into strong social and emotional personalities. These studies show the impacts that primary sources of inspirations project on children's learnings. I have taken into consideration the ongoing and future changes in Canada's educational system to support the agenda of this project. From exploring the basic ideas, terms and framework of this research, I have undertaken relative work of psychologists, research institutions and even government departments.

Theoretical Framework

Jean Piaget (1896-1980) posited that children progress through four stages:

Sensorimotor stage (Birth to 2 years old): Learning took place via assimilation and accommodation. Interactions with the environment helped child to understand himself or herself and reality.

Preoperational stage (ages 2 to 4): Child needed concrete physical situations

Concrete operations (ages 7 to 11): Child began to think abstractly, creating logical structure as physical experience accumulated and accommodation increased.

Formal Operations (beginning at ages 11 to 15): By this stage ability for abstract thinking is like an adult and the person no longer needed concrete objects.

Lev Vygotsky, a Russian psychologist, argued in his writings that higher development of a child is not intrinsic and is directly stemmed from social interactions (Scott, 2018). He further explained these early age social experiences in a breakdown of three concepts in his theory of cognitive development. First of them he called as The More Knowledgeable Other (MKO), an adult who is more skilled and involves the child in verbal dialogue or collaboration ("Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory of Cognitive Development - The Psychology Notes Headquarters", 2018). Vygotsky said that this more knowledgeable other can happen to be a parent or teacher or educator or some other peer who has verbal influence on the child and whose speech leaves an impact on individual growth of the kid.

Next, he introduced the term Zone of Proximal development (ZPD) as the time when children are on the verge of learning or accomplishing something new, but need a little push towards the finish line (Lally & Valentine-French, 2019). The helping figure can, again, be a parents or grandparents or teachers or educators. ZPD is all about the timing when help is needed by the child and the facilitation of that help by the older person. Children learn the grounds to resolve social and emotional conflicts inclined to the trainings they receive themselves.

Last but not the least, Vygotsky presented the idea of Scaffolding, which in a way wraps the whole parent to child and teacher to student mandatory social framework. He suggested that the support demanded by the child and delivered by MKO in ZPD should be temporary like a scaffolding ("Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory of Cognitive Development - The Psychology Notes Headquarters", 2018). The more knowledgeable other should be able to tune the magnitude and frequency of the help that child needs in proximal development zone, be it and then leave the child unaided to reflect on the fresh learning and carry out the problem on their own.

So, Vygotsky believed that the dynamic scope of proximal development in children's early age is the potential level, which is better and more defining in their cognitive growth compared to the actual level (the stage where children can achieve things independently) (Scott,2018). More knowledgeable others need to go through social experiences with children in these dynamic potential development times through scaffolding. Vygotsky's sociocultural theory advises that the constructive conduct of such interactions with parents, teachers and educators sponsor healthy social abilities in children.

Albert Bandura, famously known as the father of psychology, presented his Social Learning Theory (SLT) claiming that people adopt similar behaviors through their social interactions. Bandura said that a person watches another person (model) and experiences the first type of learning, that is "observation" (Bandura, 2006). He conducted a comprehensive research on 3 to 6 years old children, the Bobo Doll Experiment, where he tested a total of 74 kids in three different groups. One group was exposed to an aggressive model, one observed a non-aggressive and the last group was trialed with natural behaviors without any model (McLeod, 2014). The results highly supported Bandura's SLT that people, especially children, can embrace social behaviors by mere observation. Although this particular research illustrated the emotion of aggression, but the theory is a benchmark for all kinds of social and emotional behaviors.

In this regard, Bandura classified the type of modeling that impacts people's behaviors: live model, verbal model and symbolic model. When the subjects are early aged fragile children, live and verbal models can be their parents and educators who demonstrate and act or verbally describe and explain different social conducts. Symbolic models are the fictional characters seen in kids' story books or movies.

Another important theme of Bandura's SLT is the modeling process. The psychologist analyzed that observational learning from models takes on multiple steps. Initially, the subject will pay "attention" to a specific behavioral learning in the model and witness the scheme. Then comes the phase of "retention", where the person will memorize the learning. After that, s/he will start to reciprocate that behavior in terms of "reproduction" stage. But, for imitation the person will need a "motivation" that triggers him/her to show the learned psyche and, that is why, Bandura asserted that there is not always a social interaction outburst in the form a behavioral change, unless something activates it. Not everyone expresses the immediate adaptation in their behavior, however, the learning is preserved in the unconscious brain (Bandura, 1986).

Review of the Literature

Children's Social and Emotional Development

Bierman and Motamedi (2015) assert that social and emotional development in children entails the abilities to understand the feelings of others, take control of their feelings and proficiently get along with society. Kirk and Maccallum (2017) explained these skills would become necessary throughout children's lives and influence how they function in the community, at school and even at home. They would matter in maintaining senses of empathy, confidence, value and make them proficient in sustaining meaningful social bonds like friendships and partnership. Housman (2017) also refers to the main roles that the emotional and social capacities play in children's lives. They enable them to interact with others in positive ways, manage and express their emotions effectively. It should help them to overcome negative elements such as anxiety and boredom.

Social development involves learning the values and skills that are needed to interact with others, including approaching others, listening, taking turns, sharing, treating others with

respect, showing affection appropriately, resolving conflicts, communicating effectively, self-control, and others (Denham 2006; Underwood and Rosen 2011). On the other hand, emotional development encompasses, amongst others, acquisition of the ability to recognize emotions in one self and others, to channel feelings into socially acceptable behaviors, and to regulate both positive and negative emotions (Broadhead et al.2010).

Advances in neuroscience suggested that ninety percent of the brain develops in the first 3 years during a period of plasticity (Perry 2000), in which the flexibility of neural cells and pathways alter their structure and function in response to stimulus from the environment (Nelson et al. 2013).

As Vygotsky emphasized upon role of the more knowledgeable others and Bandura elaborated the part of models in developing social and emotional abilities of young children, many researches and studies have been conducted to analyze their propositions. The three main characters that influence the fresh generation are family, early educators and school teachers (mainly from kindergarten to level 3). Let's explore the step wise contribution of these MKOs, studied by different researches and projects:

Families' Roles in Supporting Children's Social-Emotional Development

Siddiqi, Hertzman & Irwin (2007) reported that children get their primary social experiences from their family environment. Shonkoff & Phillips (2000) also listed sensitivity and compassion of parents as first source of positive children behaviors.

Willms and Chao (2002) experimented with 19000 families, from all over the globe, and interviewed them to answer 25 questions, in context with their parental practices, for their two to eleven years old children. Many Canadian families represented both positive and negative

regional parenting settings on all socio-economic levels. The positive and responsive parenting practices that brought strongly optimistic outcomes were holding, talking, rocking, playing with the children. The damaging parenting rehearses were suggested to overcome and improved by offering appropriate services and trainings to those families.

Dr. J. Willms designed a questionnaire for Canada's National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth's survey of vulnerable children. The results showed that sensitive and compassionate parenting is the key to children's healthy social practices in their young childhood and adulthood. Study concluded that around 30% children were suffering from cognitive problems and were found in crucial need of responsiveness parenting to save their social and emotional behaviors (Matusicky & Crill Russell, 2009).

Monique Sénéchal, associate professor of psychology at Carleton University Canada, helped the National Institute of Literacy in conducting a research about the literacy involvement of parents and its effects on children's ready and vocabulary skills. In 2016, they examined the evidences of parents' intervention in their children's reading activities by plotting a longitudinal study of 1174 families, surveying their children's literacy knowledge from kindergarten to grade four. First, they inspected their home level literacy skills, then, their kindergarten level alphabet memory, after that, their spelling and reading skills in grade one and finally, in grade four, their fluency in reading and comprehension abilities. In a total of 14 studies, they used meta-analytic procedures to conclude that active parents, who encouraged to stay connected and updated with their children's activities and emotions, got healthy results of parent-children relationship. Their kids were sharper not only academically, but also socially (Sénéchal, 2006).

In 2007, The Alberta Centre for Child, Family and Community Research undertook a survey in Alberta about adults' knowledge of child's physical, cognitive, social and emotional

development. Diverse relationship adults (parents, grandparents, child cares, teachers etc.) were evaluated about their knowledge of a child going through different milestones from birth to six years of age. This survey was followed by its sequel in 2013 to weigh the contemporary knowledge (at that time) and compare the results with the earlier findings. Participants were interviewed by professionals through telephonic conversation, scheduled on regular basis. Child development knowledge was assessed in total 18 open ended questions (5 for social knowledge and 6 about emotions). In both surveys, participants showed higher level of understanding about physical development of children than social domain, emotional region of knowledge was found to be least in all Albertian adults. Both social (21% vs. 20%) and emotional (11% vs. 10%) knowledges seemed to remain constant, even after 6 years of gap, without much progress. Results of this series of surveys informed prompt and unignorable need of assisting parents and caregivers to have effective interactions with the kids for their betterment (Botey et al., 2016).

A brief study by Carthy and Max Bell Foundations showed that 27% boys and 35% girls of grade 6 students were consuming their young adulthood in high level social and emotional issues. In 2010, bearing through depression, anxiety, sleeping disorder and other emotional abnormalities, children were found in a struggle to focus on their studies and social behaviors. The primary reason is weak grounds of their family interactions and social activities. Longing for their parents; responsiveness and attention has introverted their personalities and shattered their confidence (Cooper, 2013).

Continuing to analyze the social vulnerabilities of young children, another longitudinal study was conducted in British Columbia from 2004 to 2007. All kindergarten children's data enrolled between the span of these 4 years was collected from BC Ministry of Education and examined through this cross-sectional study. 35 818 samples of 5-year-old kindergartners, when

analyzed through latent profile analysis, identified six different social-emotional profiles depending on their levels of competence, learning, responsibility, respect, aggression and hyperactivity etc. Varying from overall high, inhibited adaptive, uninhibited adaptive, inhibited-disengaged, uninhibited-aggressive to overall low social-emotional functioning, kindergartners exhibited different scales of strengths and weaknesses. Children, who belonged to lower income families, marked themselves in last category. A total of 40% profiles were fitting in the lowest level and informed the greatest need of family social and emotional care (Thomson, Guhn, Richardson, Ark & Shoveller, 2017).

Early Childhood Educators' Role in Supporting Children's Social and Emotional Development

Canada has been practicing the British pre-schooling and early childhood education trends since 1967. This method of open or informal child education upgrades and nourishes children's abilities to interact, express and communicate. In Ontario, influenced by British ideas, 400 open education schools were inaugurated in 5 years of late 18th century. The settings and efforts have been expedited since then. A vital factor, in the introduction of early education of children, is the growing change in contemporary life styles. With full time working parents, children are naturally inclined to be supervised by external caregivers and educators (Regan, 2013).

It is believed by Blank (2010), that the establishment of early childhood education is mainly viewed as a responsibility of early childhood educators (ECEs). These are teachers with specialized skills that are meant to facilitate them to work efficiently with young children. As stated by Kirk & MacCallum (2017), the strategies used by the early caregivers to create

relationships, play situations and environments worked synergistically for the purpose of supporting the social and emotional competency development of the children.

Connors-Burrow et al. (2017) study suggested that the primary roles that the ECEs engage in for the provision of emotional and social development to the children involve the providing stimulating, caring, clean, and safe environment for the toddlers and young children. They add that this ensures the safety of the children by timely identifying and preventing possible risks and health hazards. Through the maintenance of a clean and safe environment for learning, the children can gain the aspect of emotional development significantly.

While early care and education (ECE) teachers report that managing challenging behaviours is the area in which they most want training (Yoshikawa and Zigler 2000), only about 20 % of ECE providers have received recent training on supporting children's social and emotional growth (US Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Children and Families, Office of Research and Evaluation 2010–2015).

In daycare and pre-kindergarten class environments, the early educators need to support the intercommunication of these 2 to 5-year-old babies, channel their emotional attitudes in positive directions, teach them ethical lessons of truth, honesty, trust, sharing, expression, interdependency and genuine happiness ("What does an Early Childhood Educator do?", n.d.).

Philpott (2019) shares his recent experience of early childhood education research conducted in Canada, USA and UK, where the team gathered 50 years of data for three countries and formulated a way to downsize the later costly emotional education needed for special children. They are calling it quality early childhood education, the mantra of providing the special kids with primary care and pre-schooling. The caregiver or educator trains the

exceptional child in his/her premature habits and learnings, which, in later times, will lessen the need of intensive support and teaching. This quality early education has proven to be “pre-emptive”, as it pre emits the special care challenges of such children or at least minimizes the casualties. The early childhood education offer makes it a lot easier to develop and boost social and emotional powers in children. In Canada, particularly, Philpott and team observed high rates of completing high school and post-secondary education for children who were supervised by quality early education.

In the same context, the National Academy of Sciences has given an outline of four major assessment criteria of childhood social and emotional development support by an early educator: whether the caregiver can identify a child’s individual level of functioning, does the educator masters the way of instructing the child in social and emotional behaviors, how does the early educator evaluate the progress in child’s social conduct and, lastly, is the educator catching up with new advancements of child development (National Research Council, 2008).

Canadian provinces have been speaking up about the need of public early childhood education & care (ECE) services by the federal government, but the weak leadership has not been very polite about the matter. Provinces have been demanding nationwide ECE facility for working parents and their young children. 2007 report of Canadian Childcare Provision showed that 69% of new born to 2 years old babies’ mothers and 77% of 3 to 5 years old kids’ working mothers participated in labor force. Quebec, Manitoba, Ontario and Alberta, all individually and collectively, made efforts in maintaining early childhood care services. They used their own revenues in support of ECEC (International Journal of Child Care and Education Policy, 2009).

Kindergarten to Grade 3 Teachers and the Role They Play in Continuing to

Support Children's Social-Emotional Development

After the children have gotten hints of social and emotional trainings and practices from their family and early caregivers, they immediately step into the new dimensions of schooling. The teachers are, then, supposed to continue the thread of developing, shaping and modifying their behaviors. Through consistent principles and discipline maintenance, primary teachers should water the social abilities planted by parents, grandparents, other immediate relatives and educators ("Role of the Teacher in Social Development - Assignment Point", n.d.).

Blair, McKinnon & Daneri (2018) stated that the social-emotional competence in the early childhood and the elementary grades plays important role in the determination of the short and long term academic, mental health, social and employment outcomes of the children.

Katz & McClellan (2007) defined some basic but compulsory social teaching strategies that primary teachers must perform in their duties. In case of conflicts or general problem solving, teacher should be sure about the optimum level of intervention needed in young students' affairs and disputes. Healthy conflict resolving techniques and inter-student relationship building must be injected in growing minds of children. To support children in their social growth, teacher needs to fully understand their feelings. Now, there is a point of difference between compromising and justifying with those feelings. The teacher should comprehend the social awkwardness the child is going through and lighten the air of pressure but, he/she should not give up to the urge of reluctance in social activities. Children of kindergarten to grade 3 can not grasp heavy or long explanations of little concepts, so they need to be handled with authentic, straight forward and real communication with their teachers. The best and most effective techniques are the ones that the teacher does not have to repeat and get redundant with their purpose, they are real and yield long term impacts, when practiced with right calculations.

Pyle & Danniels showed in their 2016 research on play based learning of kindergarten students. They examined 15 kindergarten classrooms in Ontario and listed two types of teacher profiles. First category of teachers differentiated and applied boundaries in learning and playing domains of class. These teachers did not agree with play-based learning academics and faced challenges in implementing them. The other type of teachers not only believed in academic and socio-emotional support of plays, but also identified themselves as its important characters. Using teacher interviews and qualitative methods of observation, they concluded to prefer the teachers with play to learn pedagogy (Pyle & Danniels, 2016).

Ontario has long introduced the factor of educator team in their full day kindergarten programs. An innovative duo of professional teacher and a certified early childhood educator, together as a team, lead these classes and the results show better enriched social class environment ("A team approach makes full-day kindergarten a success", 2019). First experimented in 2010, this unique implementation of teacher educator pair is doing great in children's social behavior management. Their four years longitudinal study of half-day versus full-day kindergarten classes, ended up with the goal in educator team's side. In the latter program, 2nd grade children were sharper in academic as well as social activities than the ones attending former program. This integration of child care and schooling within education.

A case study methodology done by Kirk, 2014 was chosen to investigate how teachers from Alberta schools develop classrooms cultures that support kindergarten children's social-emotional development. The larger study from which the data discussed are derived found that the guided participation necessary to support kindergarten children's social and emotional development exists when three elements coexist. These elements are effective environments (physical and psychological) relationships (between child and teacher, child and peer, and child

and adults) (Kirk, 2014). In the larger study, eight teachers (all female) and 130 kindergarten children from eight different schools were examined. Only three of those teachers are reported here, as they provide representation of low, middle, and high socioeconomic areas and they demonstrated a range of different teaching styles. Only catholic primary schools were targeted. The data were gathered over a 9-month period using participant observations, and informal and semi-structured interviews. Each month, the researcher spent 1 to 2 hours in each classroom collecting up to 18 hours of data from each classroom over the data collection period. Informal interviews took place at the same time as the participant observations and responses were not directed by the interviewer. It was established that classroom environments consider structural (physical) and process (psychological) features of early childhood programs (Ishimine & Tayler, 2014).

Summary

Children, as soon as they become a part of family with their birth, start to learn and grow in their social and emotional behaviors. It takes place in coherence with their early age rapid brain development. The factor of social and emotional development in children is mainly evident in how the children can channel themselves in community and how well they can manage their own as well as other's emotions.

Three immediate models or more knowledgeable figures regulate these developments: parents, early educators and teachers. The primary trio governs and influences children behaviors in direct and indirect ways. Parents, through their positive and responsive characters, can cheer up the roots of socio-emotional abilities of their children. However, studies depict long term social and emotional vulnerabilities and insecurities, in cases where parents fail to do their part of the job.

Early childhood education and care has significance in children's further support in their behavioral developments. Early education plays the most important role in the systematic advancement of children's social abilities. As a middle stage between primary parental lessons and basic schooling, it can both upheave or damage the social and emotional growth of budding minds. Overall spending more on this stage of development works out strong grounds for school years, the era that eventually makes or breaks the whole person.

Kindergarten to primary school teachers promote new social skills in newly registered students, as well as, test and amend the previous learnings. With an introduction of new elements like competition, failure, teamwork, patience and confidence, teachers can use different real techniques to engage their students in collaborative environment. The concept of integrating early childhood education and primary schooling has shown better outcomes in children's development.

Canada, as a developing country, must uplift its game of children's social and emotional trainings. By running programs to educate parents about cognitive needs of their children, setting up essential childcare centers for all economic level people and training teachers to handle their tiniest students in biggest ways. These would ensure that we all offer diverse, and somehow connected, perspectives to the as they grow into young responsible and productive members of society.

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