

Child and Adult Care Professions and Education

PHILOSOPHERS AND EDUCATORS have been debating the proper way to discipline children and educate people since ancient Greece. While some theories and methods have stood the test of time and are valued thousands of years later, other methods have been discarded in modern times. In this unit, you will learn more about child and adult care and education and how the professions have evolved.



Objective:



Describe the evolution of child and adult care and education.

Key Terms:



gerontology
interdisciplinary approach
Montessori program
nature
nurture

The Evolution of Child and Adult Care and Education

The standards and popular methods of child and adult care have changed throughout the years. Technological advances have allowed researchers to discover more about how children and adults learn, giving them clues regarding the best manner in which to educate them. The new information has helped change the child and adult care professions.

CHILD CARE AND EDUCATION

The discussion of the development of the human being is believed to have been in existence since the beginning of time. History documents discussions by Aristotle and Plato in ancient Greece. The two philosophers spoke of how to properly discipline a child.

Nature vs. Nurture

Historically speaking, philosophers were intrigued with the influence of nature and nurture. **Nature** is a person's development based on heredity or genetic composition. In contrast, **nurture** is a person's development based on environmental influences. Many historical studies of children focused on changing the environment to understand how different nurturing could create diverse outcomes in child development and education.

With modern technology, researchers are learning more about brain development and the combination of nature and nurture, especially with infants. Intelligent computer programs can detect infant emotions before they are able to communicate verbally. Brain imaging can show working parts of the brain, thereby enabling studies of intelligence in nonverbal individuals.

Shift in Focus

The shift in modern research has led to changes in the education of young children. The focus of a child's education has evolved from behavioral discipline to the child's needs and interests. A **Montessori program** is an educational concept for young children; it is a setting with child-centered activities and emphasis on a developmentally appropriate environment.



BROADENING AWARENESS...

AMAZING ASPECTS: Evolution of Education

Educators have been forming their own theories and developing new methods of teaching children for hundreds of years. Today's teachers use some of these methods to foster children's interests and educate them.

J.H. Pestalozzi (1746 to 1827) started a school in Switzerland with an emphasis on developing the child's nature. His theory was that children need an emotionally secure environment to learn, and the method used sensory learning. Some of Pestalozzi's methods are still in use today.

Frederich Froebel (1782 to 1852) was a student of Pestalozzi. Froebel's methods involved play in child care. He believed teachers are "gardeners" of children—the seeds. Froebel coined the term "kindergarten," which means garden of children.

Maria Montessori (1870 to 1952) started an educational program in which children are actively involved. Children use their developmentally appropriate environment or classroom to self-lead their learning. Many schools in the United States use the Montessori approach.

John Dewey (1859 to 1952) believed learning should be based on the interests of the child. He said children are "active participants" in their own learning.

Nowadays, caregivers may obtain degrees and certificates in child development, early childhood education, and elementary education because they want to or because they must for employment. This higher education helps caregivers better understand the developmental needs of children.

ADULT CARE AND EDUCATION

Before the early 1900s, many aging adults were cared for by their own children or family members when they were no longer able to care for themselves. The technological boom in the 1900s has allowed people to live longer and healthier lives. This development brought about the need for massive adult care systems and education about aging adults.

Gerontology is the study of the physical, cognitive, and emotional development of aging adults. An **interdisciplinary approach** is an approach to adult care that focuses on the involvement of several disciplines for the education of one major topic. Many experts recommend an interdisciplinary approach to adult care and education.



FIGURE 1. Gerontologists are health care professionals who care for elderly patients.

Key Professionals

The care and education of aging adults typically involves several key professionals in diverse areas.

- ◆ Health care workers are an important element of adult care and provide necessary medical care.
- ◆ Professional psychologists and counselors work with aging individuals' mental health. They help guide family members in understanding and caring for an aging individual.
- ◆ Social services professionals may be needed to educate aging adults about health care literacy, including medical terms, procedures, billing, and insurance paperwork.
- ◆ Family financial educators and financial counselors help aging adults and their families with financial planning estate planning. In addition, they may help with issues related to medical expenses and possibly assisted-living housing expenses.
- ◆ Lawmakers are needed to create laws that protect the aging population from physical, mental, and financial abuse from family members, caregivers, and strangers.

Summary:



Historically speaking, philosophers were intrigued with the influence of nature and nurture. With modern technology, researchers are learning more about brain development and the combination of nature and nurture, especially with infants. The shift in modern research has led to changes in the education of young children. The focus has evolved from behavioral discipline to the child's needs and interests.

Gerontology is the study of the physical, cognitive, and emotional development of aging adults. Experts recommend an interdisciplinary approach to adult care. This type of approach focuses on the involvement of several disciplines for the education of one major topic.

Checking Your Knowledge:



1. What is the difference between nature and nurture?
2. What are Montessori programs?
3. What is gerontology?
4. What is an interdisciplinary approach?
5. What are two examples of professionals who help care for adults in an integrated program?

Expanding Your Knowledge:



Visit a traditional preschool classroom and a Montessori classroom. Observe how the children play, interact, and learn. Compare and contrast the roles of the teachers in the two environments. Make notes on your observations, and share them with your classmates. What is the biggest difference between the two classrooms? What things are the same? Share your opinion with your classmates about which classroom you think is more effective in teaching young children.

Web Links:



Careers in Aging

<http://www.careersinaging.com/careersinaging/what.html>

Montessori FAQs

<http://www.montessori.edu/FAQ.html>

Social Gerontology

<http://www.trinity.edu/mkearl/geron.html>