Chapter 3
Promoting Diversity: A Focus on the Family, Community, and Early Child Education Learning Objectives

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ABSTRACT

This chapter outlines the roles of family, community, and early child education learning objectives as they relate to promoting diversity within early child education environments. Specifically, concepts such as parenting approaches, the ecological systems theory, early child education program models, and diversity are all discussed in this chapter. Early child education learning objectives such as those outlined by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) are also applied as they relate to promoting children’s developmental domains (social, emotional, cognitive, social) while further encouraging the integration of diversity and appreciation of everyone’s cultures and backgrounds within early child education environments.

INTRODUCTION

The concept of diversity is thought to originate from various experiences, perceptions, backgrounds, cultures, or heredities that individuals hold (Robinson & Diaz, 2006). All of these factors are directly associated with enriching children’s educational experiences, while also enabling them to appreciate others’ unique characteristics and cultures.

When considering the origin of diversity and its integration into early child environments, various factors, such as children’s socialization passed down by caregivers, the community, and early childhood learning objectives should be discussed. These variables are important to consider, as they relate to agents of socialization within children’s environments that influence their experiences, beliefs, and perceptions. The ecological systems theory created by Bronfenbrenner (1992) may also be applied to these variables, as the theory highlights the roles in which factors directly and indirectly influence children’s development. Bronfenbrenner’s theory will be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter.

Key objectives of this chapter include discussing socialization in relation to how diversity may be promoted within children’s lives by specific socializing agents. These agents are defined as variables

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that have been found to be responsible for or associated with children’s behaviors and overall experiences within their environments. When considering the concept of nature versus nurture, socialization is directly aligned with nurture, or factors within children’s environments that have been found to influence children’s development. The chapter will also outline the role of community and its association with early child education learning objectives.

BACKGROUND

Children are typically acknowledged as active agents within their environments (Couchenour & Chrisman, 2014). Thus, children’s development is largely dependent on their interactions as well as the interplay of nature and nurture (Crown, Oyebode, & Ramsay, 2006). Nature relates to children’s genetic composition, while nurture is associated with children’s environments and how they may influence children’s outcomes. This chapter will mainly focus on nurture, or how environmental factors may influence children’s development. Examples of nurture that will be discussed in this chapter include parenting styles, the types of meta-emotion approaches parents use, early child education classrooms, teachers, the media, culture and society, as well as socialization.

The concept of socialization is related to children’s interactions within their environments (Baker, Fenning, & Crinic, 2011). Specifically, socialization is defined as the process in which information is passed from individuals to individuals based on their beliefs, values, backgrounds, experiences (Baker, Fenning, & Crinic, 2011). Examples of specific agents, or factors associated with children’s socialization include parents and caregivers, school environments, neighborhoods, as well as culture. All of these agents serve the role as an impetus, which may influence children’s experiences and perceptions about the world around them.

In turn, parents play a significant role within children’s lives, as the experiences they provide them as well as the nurturing they exhibit directly influence children’s development (Baumrind, 1966). For instance, parents’ socialization of their children’s emotions may directly influence children’s social competences and overall emotional expressions directed towards other peers (Baker, Fenning & Crinic, 2011). Thus, children’s emotion regulation abilities have been found to be associated with the processes in which parents socialize their children’s emotions (Gottman, 1997). Specifically, Morris, Silk, Steinberg, Myers, and Robinson (2007) stated that children’s emotion regulation abilities are influenced by family dynamics, such as the quality of parents’ relationships with one another, parents’ own displays of emotion regulation, as well as children’s attachments to their parents. Thus, socialization of children’s emotions may be affected by these factors within children’s environments. Socialization of children’s emotions are associated with the concept of meta-emotion (Gottman, 1997), which will be outlined in greater detail in this chapter.

As mentioned above, a theorist associated with children’s socialization is Bronfenbrenner (1992). Bronfenbrenner (1992) created an ecological systems theory that highlights how these socialization agents interplay and influence children’s outcomes. This theory is important to discuss, as it illustrates the both direct and indirect influences on children’s development. An in-depth presentation about parenting and its role with children’s social and emotional development will also be presented in this chapter. All of these mechanisms relate to children’s socialization with peers and overall abilities to interact positively towards others. This may also encompass children’s acceptance of others’ differences, which underlies the concept of diversity.