Everything about development

On the foundations of developmental psychology

Summary

Every scientific discipline claims a specific domain of knowledge. Developmental psychology was and is strongly identified with child psychology and is expected to have practical relevance for handling and solving everyday questions concerning developmental disorders, childrearing, education, etc. According to Wohlwill, up to the fifties, developmental psychology was 'by and large either clinically oriented, with dominant interests in problems of personality development, or concerned with purely practical aspects of child behaviour'. However, today most developmental psychologists have little to say about the development or developmental problems of a particular child and will show some reluctance when asked to do so.

When knowledge about children is not the most characteristic feature of developmental psychology, what could it be that developmental psychologists knowable about? To give a straightforward and somewhat bold answer one could say that they know everything about development, that is, they have knowledge about developmental processes and changes, the conditions that make development possible or facilitate development, the constraints on development, and so on. One would expect developmental psychologists to be able to give a clear answer to the question what is development?. This study shows that it is rather difficult to formulate an unambiguous answer.

The knowledge contained in classic developmental psychology, as this book calls it, is of a very special kind and gives a rather narrow, if not limited perspective on developmental change. This book aims at clarifying the background of this particular limitation and will propose a broader, more open perspective on developmental processes. This involves going deeper into the foundations of developmental psychology, that is, to the conceptualisation of development in developmental theories and models.

The first three chapters present a general discussion of the foundations of developmental psychology. The first chapter introduces the central purpose of the investigation: the description and analysis of the structure of developmental models. To make such a description and analysis possible, three main foundational questions are proposed. The first question aims at specifying the levels of generalization of developmental models. Psychological development refers to the ontogenetic level in the first place, but the explanation of developmental processes involves also the phylogenetic, anthropetic levels. The second question specifies developmental psychology: what are the psychological processes that unfold in their development, and what is the relationship between development and the differentiation between developmental stages leading to that final state. A prospective conceptualisation of development is one that looks at development as a unilinear and unidirectional process of development, in particular, has been promulgated in our explanation of ontogenetic changes. The assumption is that all individual stages in their development. In this perspective, the developmental process is a process that is at least in part open to future events. The development of an organism is individual and is founding father, and the final state of development is achieved through the interaction of the organism with its environment. The second chapter gives a more detailed picture of the developmental process. In the description and explanation of developmental change, the developmental process is treated as a fixed order of developmental stages leading to that final state. A retrospective conceptualisation of development, on the other hand, is a process that is at least in part open to future events. The development of an organism is individual and is founding father, and the final state of development is achieved through the interaction of the organism with its environment. The second chapter gives a more detailed picture of the developmental process. In the description and explanation of developmental change, the developmental process is treated as a fixed order of developmental stages leading to that final state. The development of an organism is individual and is founding father, and the final state of development is achieved through the interaction of the organism with its environment.
developmental psychology

a specific domain of knowledge, strongly identified with child psychology for handling and solving everyday disorders, childrearing, education, etc. Developmental psychology was by and large concerned with practical aspects of child behaviour, psychologists have little to say about the development of a particular child and will not be that developmental psychologists might get 'stuck' in a particular field. This study shows that development is not the most characteristic feature of a developmental psychologist. As this book aims at clarifying the background of a broader, more open perspective on the conceptualisation of development in the discussion of the foundations of developmental psychology. The second chapter gives a more detailed discussion of the various levels of generalisation. In the description and explanation of ontogenetic change, developmental psychology has relied heavily upon biological theory and has therefore chosen the phylogenetic level of generalisation. Darwin's theory of evolution, in particular, has been promulgated as the starting point and foundation of developmental psychology as a scientific discipline. This link between Darwin and psychological development represents a rather narrow interpretation of both the concept of development and Darwinian biology. It regards normative (ideological) assumptions about the ideal course of development as implicitly determining the theory of psychological development. This chapter argues for a better understanding of the history of developmental psychology and its founders, and tries to explain why we use the concept of development in our explanation of ontogenetic change.

Summary

Involves also the phylogenetic, anthropogenetic, sociogenetic and microgenetic levels. The second question specifies the two main features of developmental psychology: what are the psychological states or stages which individuals pass through in their development, and which mechanisms are responsible for the transition from one state to an other? The third question has to do with what are called problems in the description of development. These problems are associated with the relationship between development and context, the direction and goal of development, and the differentiation between so-called retrospective and prospective conceptualisations of development. This differentiation is of importance for the study of developmental models.

Most models in classic developmental psychology, associated with the theories of Piaget, Kohlberg and Freud, provide a retrospective (backward looking) conceptualisation of development, in which development is described from the perspective of the final state of development, as a sequence of specific developmental stages leading to that final state. A retrospective conceptualisation describes development as a unilinear and unidirectional process and as such permits only a limited amount of interindividual and intercultural variation in developmental trajectories. The assumption is that all individuals will follow the same sequence of stages in their development. In this perspective, development is a closed process.

Contrary to the retrospective conceptualisation is the prospective (forward looking) conceptualisation of development. Here the initial state forms the starting point in the description of development. In the prospective conceptualisation, a fixed order of developmental stages and sequences is by no means necessary. A prospective conceptualisation leaves more room for the influence of chance on the developmental process and as a consequence defines development as a process that is at least in part open and unpredictable. Although there is no established tradition of prospective conceptualisations of development, this study tries to make clear how a prospective orientation can be fruitful for the understanding of developmental processes.

The second chapter gives a more detailed discussion of the various levels of generalisation. In the description and explanation of ontogenetic change, developmental psychology has relied heavily upon biological theory and has therefore chosen the phylogenetic level of generalisation. Darwin's theory of evolution, in particular, has been promulgated as the starting point and foundation of developmental psychology as a scientific discipline. This link between Darwin and psychological development represents a rather narrow interpretation of both the concept of development and Darwinian biology. It regards normative (ideological) assumptions about the ideal course of development as implicitly determining the theory of psychological development. This chapter argues for a better understanding of the history of developmental psychology and its founders, and tries to explain why we use the concept of development in our explanation of ontogenetic change.
Alles over ontwikkeling

The third chapter presents an overview and analysis of the different conceptualisations and uses of the term development in everyday and theoretical contexts. It also discusses in more detail the two main features of developmental psychology (stages and mechanisms of development) as formulated under the second core question in chapter one. The difficulty of answering the question what is development?, is illustrated with an investigation of the opinion of experts on the meaning of development. When it comes to defining the practical and theoretical meaning of development, experts show a striking lack of consensus.

After these three introductory chapters, the following two chapters elaborate on the foundational questions, exemplified in the analysis of two general models of development: life-span developmental psychology and the developmental theory of Heinz Werner. As stated earlier, while no established tradition exists within the prospective conceptualisation of development, it was anticipated that the two general models might lend themselves to such a conceptualisation.

In the fourth chapter the consequences of a life-span approach to development are discussed and this approach is contrasted with classic developmental psychology. One of the main features of classic developmental psychology, strongly associated with the work of Piaget, lies in the central role of the final state in the (retrospective) description of development. According to the life-span developmental approach, development is a lifelong process in which individuals show a large amount of variation in their developmental trajectories. This makes development at least in part unpredictable and also makes it difficult to specify a general final state. Life-span developmental psychology might profit from a more prospectively oriented conceptualisation of development. The chapter tries to relate the prospective conceptualisation to the role individuals themselves play in the construction of their development.

The fifth chapter presents an analysis of the developmental theory of Heinz Werner. In comparison with Piaget’s, the work of Werner has not had a major impact on developmental thinking in some sense it has been overshadowed by the work of the former. Nevertheless, Werner’s work is a developmental theory par excellence. Werner sought to apply developmental conceptualisation not only to all phases of the life-span, but also to biological, cultural, pathological and neurological phenomena. That is, he applied the notion of development to all levels of generalisation. For Werner, development is not of a natural kind, a process which really exists in the individual, in history, etc., but a heuristic concept that enables one to study phenomena of change in terms of development. In cooperation with Bernard Kaplan he formulated a principle of development, called the orthogenetic principle, which states that ‘wherever development occurs, it proceeds from a state of relative lack of differentiation to a state of increasing differentiation, articulation, and hierarchic integration’. This principle is defined independent of a specific level of generalisation retrospectively organised, in terms of a fixed or determined by the final state. The global initial state description of development. In addition to trying to make clear how the work of Werner orientation of developmental thinking. The metapho rise the orthogenetic principle.

The sixth chapter can be seen as an introduction to a specific domain of development: magic. In general it follows the procedure of the go one step further by proposing a theoretical largely oriented approach to development: at which there is no fixed order of developmental which a global initial state is taken as the starting velopment. The chosen domains are related to symbolisation and have consequently not attracted developmental psychology. In fact, in the early development psychology, understanding of the dreaming process, the drar rest boiled down to the question what the child stand. The phenomena were seen as (irrational) cognitive capacity. In this chapter it is stated that obstacles which arise in the development towards they are important in themselves. Their develop bed route with a definite final state; they lack a function. For that reason they are characterised as

The seventh chapter discusses the apparent decline in the history of western civilisation the everyday mind in favor of rationalised conceptions of reality. Logical thinking has been overruled by reason. How disappeared completely. In the first place, the thing which was defined as magical, and secondly, also in adults we are no longer. Selma Fraiberg gives a description of the role of magic on the theories of Freud and Piaget. With the driving respectively as a final state description, the dis characterised as a process of rationalisation. The theory of magic in adults, other than in the form of thinking in adults, other than in the form of thinking can be conceived of as a more or less which might be of importance in the (esthetic) est further tries to outline the structure of magic by
of the different conceptual day and theoretical contexts.

es of developmental psychology formulated under the second asking the question what is de-
the opinion of experts on the op practical and theoretical lack of consensus.

mg two chapters elaborate on d aly of two general models of logy and the developmental no established tradition exists development, it was anticipated es to such a conceptualisation.

pan approach to development classic developmental psychono-mental psychology, strongly as-
tral role of the final state in the xing to the life-span develop-
s in which individuals show tral trajectories. This makes de-
akes it difficult to specify a ge-
ology might profit from a more elopement. The chapter tries to ole individuals themselves play

developmental theory of Heinz of Werner has not had a major sense it has been overshadowed mer's work is a developmental conceptualisation biological, cultural, pathologi-
lated the notion of development oppment is not of a natural kind, a story, etc., but a heuristic con-
ange in terms of development. The principle of development, wherever development occurs, initiate to a state of increasing nation'. This principle is defined independent of a specific level of generalisation or time-scale. Moreover, it is not retrospectively organised, in terms of a fixed order of developmental states, determined by the final state. The global initial state forms the starting point in the description of development. In addition to presenting an analysis, this chapter also tries to make clear how the work of Werner may be relevant for contemporary developmental thinking. The metaphor of the fractal is used to characterise the orthogenetic principle.

The sixth chapter can be seen as an introduction to three chapters each of which concerns a specific domain of development: magical thinking, dreaming and artistry. In general it follows the procedure of the foregoing chapters, but it tries to go one step further by proposing a theoretical framework for an open, prospectively oriented approach to development: an approach to development in which there is no fixed order of developmental states, no fixed final state and in which a global initial state is taken as the starting point for the description of development. The chosen domains are related to the topics of imagination and symbolisation and have consequently not attracted much attention in classic developmental psychology. In fact, in the early decades of the twentieth century, developmental psychologists were interested in magical thinking, the child's understanding of the dreaming process, the drawings of children, but their interest boiled down to the question what the child can or cannot do and understand. The phenomena were seen as (irrational) symptoms of the child's limited cognitive capacity. In this chapter it is stated that these phenomena are not just obstacles which arise in the development towards rational functioning, but that they are important in themselves. Their development does not follow a prescribed route with a definite final state; they lack an unambiguous psychological function. For that reason they are characterised as purposeless structures.

The seventh chapter discusses the apparent decline of the magical world. In the history of western civilisation the everyday meaning of magic has been diminished in favor of rationalised conceptions of reality. One could conclude that magical thinking has been overruled by reason. However, magical thinking has not disappeared completely. In the first place, the thinking of children can be classified as magical, and secondly, also in adults we may find traces of magical thinking. Selma Fraiberg gives a description of the magical world of the child, based on the theories of Freud and Piaget. With the reality principle or formal thinking respectively as a final state description, the development of the child is characterised as a process of rationalisation. These theories can hardly account for magical thinking in adults, other than in the form of pathological, irrational thinking. The theory of Werner is employed in order to make clear that magical thinking can be conceived of as a more or less autonomous way of thinking, which might be of importance in the (esthetic) imagination of adults. This chapter further tries to outline the structure of magic by going into the relationship be-

Summary
tween magic, reason and emotion, and discusses the relationship between cul-
tural history and ontogenetic development of (magical) thinking.

Chapter eight defends and elaborates the standpoint that dreaming as a mental
process with a meaningful content, is mediated by the social and cultural con-
text in which dreaming takes place. On the one hand, dreaming may not be re-
duced to a strictly internal mental process, in the fashion attempted by Freud; on
the other, dreaming is not the mere neurophysiological activity during REM
sleep, suggesting that the dream is a meaningless reflex of the sleeping brain.
Dreaming as symbolic activity is an interindividual and sociocultural process
which starts with the words I dream. Children are introduced to this symbolic
activity when they recall a night-time experience and are told that they were
dreaming. It is stated that from this point of view it is senseless to say that some-
one who did not remember a dream dreams, even if we know that waking indi-
viduals during their REM sleep period will almost always result in the recall of a
dream experience. The chapter tries to make clear that dreaming and the de-
velopment of dreaming is an open process, strongly influenced by the specific pro-
erties of the dreamer's context.

The ninth chapter takes as its starting point the significant resemblances between
the drawings of children and the artistic products of adult artists. Developmental
psychologists and contemporary artists seem to be aware of this resemblance.
However, children's art is not appreciated as an autonomous product but rather
as a specific and particular symptom of children's behaviour. On the one hand
children's drawings seem to have some artistic value, on the other, this value is
seen as a symptom of children's development, its preformal level of cognitive
functioning. This chapter specifies how a prospective conceptualisation of de-
velopment can shed light on the topic of artistic development. It explains what
is meant when one speaks of children's art and the child as artist and makes clear that
our understanding and appreciation of the artistic products of children is related
to cultural history in general and art history in particular.

The final chapter is an epilogue and recapitulates the general aims and conclu-
sions of this study. It underlines the importance of insight and reflection on the
foundations of developmental thinking and repeats that we should not stick to
the question what is development? but should also give an account of the question
why development?, by making explicit the underlying normative and ideological
assumptions in conceptualisation of development. It is stated that a more
open, prospective conceptualisation of development does not mean that we
must ban all normative and ideological thinking in developmental psychology:
such a conceptualisation gives room for a critical reflection upon the normative
aspects in theory building. Whatever the outcome of this reflection may be, it
will hardly be ever possible to know everything about development.

I

 Een proeve van het ongetemde
vooruitgangsdenken

Inleiding

1.1 Een ontgoocheling?

De grondslagen van de wetenschappelijke
ontwikkelingspsychologie, zoals die in de tweede halve eeuw is
ontwikkeld, vertonen duidelijke sporen van een dergelijke perspekti
tiene eeuwse denken in termen van ontwikkeling heeft, in een zo algemeen
onsluitende opmerking over veranderingen in gedrag over tijdensloop of een deel daarvan (Wohllwill
1961) niet om verandering zonder meer, maar om een bepaalde richting, en ten tweede
derstellen, hetzij als resultaat van interne of externe, een soort natuurlijke drang die eigen zou
produkt van doelbewust ingrijpen door de wereld. Waar de oorzaken van die veranderingen
wachtig is dat ze resulteren in een hogere ontwikkeling?

Bernard Kaplan (1983) heeft een zeer de aard van dat hoger niveau van functio
nekingspsychologie als de discipline die in de richting van de perfectie van het individu in de twintigste
dezer tijd in de ontwikkelingspsychologie steeds meer is gerationaliseerd en
hoofdstromingen in de ontwikkelingspsychologie steeds meer is gerationaliseerd en
schee zullen in het ge-

merken dat het niet volledig is verdwen