

A Cultural-Historical View of Child Development: Key Concepts for Going Beyond a Universal View of the Child¹⁾

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Abstract

A developmental view of child development with its biological imperatives has been extensively critiqued over the years and found to be wanting from a range of cultural (Rogoff, 2003; Howes, 2010), social (Qvortrup, Corsaro & Honig, 2009) and even health (Bendelow, 2009; Rogoff, 2011) reasons. But what has been missing from these debates has been a theoretically robust presentation of another way of conceptualizing children's development (Hedegaard & Fleer, 2013). In drawing upon cultural-historical theory, this paper argues for a more localised and nuanced conception of human development. Through analyzing how society creates the conditions for children's development (Hedegaard, 2012), this paper presents a view of development that captures both a traditional (historical lived in the present moment) and contemporary (new cultural technologies) view of children's lived experiences.

Keywords : cultural-historical theory, social situation of development, perezhivanie, early childhood, play, child development, drama

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Introduction

Howes (2010) stated that in the field of early childhood education that there is an expectation that children's development supported by quality early education be framed for "poor children as well as affluent; children of color as well as White children; and children who speak English as a first, second, or third language" (p. 1). Howes (2010) argues that there are "two sets of expectations, of both exemplary and culturally adaptive standards of care" where a universal view of development is clearly problematic. Not only is it "difficult for teachers and programs to conceptualize and to implement" (p. 1) these universal programs, but teachers also need support in thinking about, and interpreting the range of culturally specific ways that children develop.

Evidence for cultural plurality for children's development, particularly in the early period of children's life in families and communities, has generally been well documented, but particularly in the research of Rogoff (1990; 2003). Rogoff was able to show early on the culturally specific ways of developing which went beyond the reach of the biological imperatives that underpin longstanding "developmentally appropriate practices" as noted in the US (e.g. Bredekamp & Copple, 1997). The latter has been extensively critiqued over the years (Wood, 2010) and is not taken up in the discussion in this paper. However, it is noted that this view of development has framed and colonized practices in many countries in the South (Farquhar and Fleer, 2007). For example, longstanding approaches in Australia (Grieshaber & McArdle, 2010), current practices in Singapore (Ministry of Education, 2012), and some emerging global economies, such as China (Rao & Li, 2009), are working with adapted versions of a DAP framework. In the latter, we see cross-cultural studies which examine if programs in Hong Kong China are "developmentally appropriate" (see Cheng & Wu, 2013, p. 207). The lasting effect of this view of development can also be seen in the UK (Sylva, Melhuish, Sammons, Siraj-Blatchford, & Taggart, 2010) where policies "and theoretical frameworks can be seen as regimes of power because they privilege certain ways of understanding children against a developmental continuum, typically conceptualized as stages, norms and milestones, and against curriculum goals, which can serve to position groups and individuals in deficit terms" (Wood, 2010, p. 12).

But what has been missing from the expansive literature in early education and in

developmental psychology has been a theoretically robust presentation of another way of conceptualizing children's development for early childhood (Hedegaard & Fler, 2013). It is beyond the scope of a journal paper to give a full theoretical explanation of a new theory of child development. However, some key conceptual drivers explained through examples of some everyday practices from one cultural community may afford some insight into beginning to solve this key problem. This paper argues that the everyday life experiences of children create the conditions for children's development. In drawing upon cultural-historical theory to discuss a revolutionary view of child development (Vygotsky, 1998), the key concepts of the social situation of development (Vygotsky, 1994), the relations between ideal and real form (Vygotsky, 1994; 1998), and the concepts of motives and leading activity (Vygotsky, 1966), are discussed in order to conceptualise a more culturally responsive view of child development. Here culture does not relate specifically to ethnicity, but rather it refers to the cultural development of a child within their specific community. That is, all the non-biological dimensions that shape children's development, such as the values, practices and affordances within a family, community or society, alongside of how the child in turn shapes the social and material conditions in which they live. A cultural-historical conception of child development also includes the historically formed practices that are valued by a community. For example, language, dress, forms of literacy acquired through schooling, or family specific values such as manners, and eating practices (e.g. eating with hands, chops sticks, forks). Together, they constitute both historically formed and valued practices, such as how one eats, and recently introduced practices, such as the use of digital technologies. Both shape contemporary practice and afford in everyday life opportunities for child development.

This paper suggests that what is needed is a more localised and nuanced conception of human development. Through analyzing how society creates the conditions for children's development (Hedegaard, 2012), this paper presents a view of development that captures through some examples taken from research, both a traditional (historical lived in the present moment) and contemporary (new cultural technologies) view of children's lived experiences.

We begin this paper with a discussion of the key cultural-historical concepts in order to show how a localized, rather than a universal view of child development, can be conceptualised.

Cultural-Historical View of Child Development

Vygotsky (1998) put forward a new view of child development. His theory is conceptualized as a system of concepts which together make up a new way of thinking about children's development. In this short article it is only possible to focus on a few concepts. For clarity of explanation the central concepts are introduced in succession. However, they should be considered as part of an expansive and dynamic system of concepts.

In Vygotsky's time, behaviourism was the dominant view driving both research and thinking in child development. However, his critique of "age" as the main trait of development is relevant for the current early childhood education context, where many countries have been colonized by a view of child development that is framed in relation to ages and stages, and where progression is measured against traditional European development (e.g. Piaget) or US benchmarks for developmentally appropriate practice.

Vygotsky (1998) argued that defining child development in relation to age is problematic. He suggested that age as a criterion for dividing up a child's life course acts merely as signposts and says very little about the child. One age begins and another age ends. This view gives little insight into how development occurs. He also suggested that age as a marker of children's development, focuses attention on obvious external traits, such as when beginning to walk, when learning to talk, or different periods of dentition. He argued that "it is not enough to divide a child's development into periods scientifically. We must also consider its dynamics and the dynamics of transitions from one age level to another" (p. 190). Finally, Vygotsky (1998) remarked that age as a central criterion for making child development says little about the qualitative changes that result from the child's relations to their social and material world. Vygotsky's (1998) critique, and his alternative reading of development can be encapsulated in two ways.

All theories of child development can be reduced to two basic conceptions. According to one, development is nothing other than realization, modification, and combination of deposits. Nothing new develops here - only a growth, branching, and regrouping of those factors that were already present at the very beginning. According to the second conception, development is a continuous process of self-propulsion characterized primarily by a continuous appearance and formation of the new which did not exist at previous stages. This point of view captures in development something essential to a dialectical

understanding of the process (p. 190).

Vygotsky's (1998) view of child development begins with the latter conception, where development is characterized as a process of the "unity of material and mental aspects, a unity of the social and the personal" (p. 190). This unity is localized and experienced in the everyday life conditions of children as they take part in day to day activities at home, in preschool, and in their community (Hedegaard & Flear, 2013). Vygotsky's (1998) observed that the day to day developmental possibilities were one dimension of a dialectical view child development. He conceptualized the first dimension as follows:

...at certain age levels, development is marked by slow, evolutionary or lytic flow. These are age levels of predominantly smooth and frequently unremarkable internal change in the child's personality, change that is accomplished by insignificant "molecular" attainments. Here, over a more or less long time that usually takes several years, no fundamental, abrupt shifts and alterations occur that reconstruct the child's whole personality. More or less remarkable changes in the child's personality occur here only as a result of long-term cryptic "molecular" process. They appear outside and are accessible to direct observation only as a conclusion of long-term processes of latent development (p. 190).

In Vygotsky (1998) reading of child development the second dimension of human development is not so stable, but rather is theorised as the concept of "crisis". Vygotsky (1998) stated that the "crisis arises imperceptibly - it is difficult to determine its onset and termination." (p. 191). The manifestation of these critical periods of development are usually conceptualized as problems or difficult moments. Children are thought to become difficult, and this is perceived negatively in relation to a child's development. But this is not Vygotsky's reading of the child, because this view assumes development is something that is simply an internal process in the child. This view does not consider the social relations between the child and the adult. For instance, the toddler or the teenager who has gained competencies in being socially responsible and capable, but who when treated as a "baby" or as a "child" respectively, will become resistant or "difficult", if they are not treated as someone with competences who can do things. The problem is not with the development of the child or the teenager, but rather the social relations in which the child or the teenager are participating in at that time. These critical points are potentially indicators of the progression

of the child's development. However, these critical moments could also be situations where development is intensified due to some major life transition, such as when children begin school or enter the workforce.

Vygotsky (1997) argued that both the unremarkable everyday microscopic movements and the abrupt and dynamic crises each contribute to a child's development, and when taken together they constitute Vygotsky's view of child development. For instance, starting school constitutes a major change in a child's life. This is an example of a potential dynamic crisis or critical moment. Getting up every morning to meet the demands of arriving at preschool or school on time, constitute an unremarkable everyday microscopic movement, which changes the life conditions for a child because they must eat, dress and prepare for a journey to school within a specified time period. Greishaber (2004) has shown that even these everyday routines that occur from day to day can become contested spaces for power relations between children and their parents. What is central to a cultural-historical view of child development is the qualitative changes that occurs as a result of both the unremarkable microscopic movements and the dynamic crises. This dialectical conceptualization of child development is very different to an evolutionary or maturational view of development, where the child proceeds along a particular pre-determined path benchmarked by the child's age.

Bozhovich (2009) argued that Vygotsky's theory of child development with microscopic and critical periods constituted a dialectical leap to a new quality that can best be compared with the metaphor of the caterpillar being transformed into a chrysalis, and the chrysalis into a butterfly. It is not just "a matter of a simple quantitative increase into what the child already had, but a qualitative transformation from one form to another" (p. 61). The dynamic and microscopic changes in a child's life do not on their own explain how the child contributes to their own development in these situations. We now turn to the concept of the social situation of development to understand the relations between the child and their environment and how their agency matters in a cultural-historical conception of child development.

Social Situation of Development

Another defining feature of Vygotsky's theory of child development was the concept of the *social situation of development*. This concept captures the unity between the child and their

social and material environment. This concept seeks to explain how two children in exactly the same social and material situation can experience it differently. This concept is illustrated through an example.

Ginger (3.9 years) is trying to create an animation of the fairytale of Goldilocks and the Three Bears, using an iPad and soft toys. She wants to take photographs of the bears with the iPad, so that they can be brought together as series of moving photographs illustrating the story sequence. Owen who is exactly the same age (3.9 years) is focused on playing with the objects. He is interacting in the same space as Ginger, and he is using exactly the same materials. However, Owen only pays attention to the animation process when prompted by the adult who is supporting them to make a movie of Goldilocks and the Three Bears.

Five children are either standing or seated at the table where Sue (the research assistant) is actively supporting Ginger and Owen to make a movie of Goldilocks and the three bears. An iPad is positioned in front of an upturned box which acts as a stage for the 3 soft toys (3 bears) and 3 bowls (2 small and 1 large) [see Figure 1 below].



Figure 1: Making a Movie of Goldilocks and the 3 bears

The space between the stage and the iPad is used to bring into view each of the objects for telling the story and for photographing the objects as part of making the movie. Sue says as she moves a small bowl into the space “*We put baby bear’s bowl into the picture...*” and Ginger moves her head to follow the placement of the bowl and to look at the iPad to see if the object is in the field of view. Ginger then moves the soft toy bear towards Sue’s hand and Sue takes the soft toy bear and moves it into the space saying “*and mummy bear comes in.*” Ginger then takes over, and moves the bear around in the space, checking her hand movements in relation to the iPad screen. Owen is focused on the soft toys and picks them up and moves them about, re-enacting part of the fairytale for his own attention. Sue says, “*Do you want to take the picture?*” Owen looks on. As Sue asks this question Owen moves his hand towards the iPad and takes the picture. Sue then says “*Move mummy bear along, and take the picture*”. Owen points to the bigger bear and says “*He looks grumpy, doesn’t he?*” He then looks to the other bears, appearing to check out their expressions, whilst making growling noises and scrunching up his face to simulate looking grumpy. He turns back to the iPad and presses the camera button.

As Sue discusses the need for considering the process of showing the making of the porridge by the bears, Owen focuses only on the objects. In response to Sue’s questions, Owen says “*Here’s some oats*” as he picks up the Goldilocks doll and shakes her above the bowl, pretending that oats have fallen into the bowl. As he makes the shaking movements, he also makes ‘*sh sh sh*’ sounds. Owen then takes a metal stick and begins to stir the imaginary oats in the bowl. He focuses on the objects only, moving them about and saying “*That’s Goldilock’s clothes*”. He then unsuccessfully tries to dress Goldilocks and returns to stirring the porridge. Sue and Ginger move the iPad so that they can photograph the stirring action. But Owen is oblivious to this. Ginger continues to look to the objects in the context of capturing a photograph of them on the iPad. Eventually Owen finishes stirring the porridge and focuses on what is showing on the iPad. (see Fleer, 2014: 5-6)

What we see in this example is that Ginger has *an orientation to learning* how to create an animation of the story of Goldilocks and the Three Bears, using an iPad and soft toys. Owen has a *motive orientation towards play*. A cultural-historical reading of play suggests that children (and adults) create an imaginary situation. In these imaginary situations, children change the meaning of objects and actions in their play (Vygotsky, 1966). Owen changed the meaning of the stick – it was not longer a metal rod – in the imaginary situation it was a spoon. He was oriented to the imaginary situation. Ginger wanted to place the objects in relation to both the iPad camera lens and in relation to the correct fairytale sequence so she could photograph them. She was oriented to learning how to make a digital animation of the

fairytale.

Two children who are in exactly the same situation experience it completely differently because of their motive orientation to either play or learning. Vygotsky (1994) introduced this concept through clinical work where he noted in one case example, how a mother with substance abuse had three children who each had experienced a dysfunctional family environment, but because of their social situation of development had experienced this same family life differently. In short, the youngest child did not understand why he was neglected, and developed a form of neurosis. However, the eldest child (aged eight), worried about his mother and understood she could not care for them. He took on the role of parenting and caring for all the children and the mother. He did not develop any psychological disorders, but rather was able to function at a high level. The concept of the *social situation of development* helps explain how children experience the same situation differently. Children come to the same everyday situations in life and in early childhood settings with a different *social situation of development*. In the example of using the iPad to create an animation, both children exhibited agency. How they meet the demands of the situation is different for both children. That is, Ginger and Owen are not being considered in relation to particular *milestones* associated with their age, as defined by maturational theory, or their particular stage of development as defined by Piaget, but rather we consider their development in terms of the *social situation of their development*. We notice that one child is oriented to play and the other to learning and this influences the possibilities for child development for the same situation in different ways. What they each take from the same situation (play or learning) is different because of their motive orientation. A cultural-historical theory of child development takes into account both the situation and the child's motive orientation.

Bozhovich (2009) in discussing Vygotsky's theory of child development says that the social and material environment, such as the iPad and the soft toys of Goldilocks and the 3 Bears, "should be viewed not as the 'developmental setting'" (p. 65) as we might think if we were following a Piagetian view, "the effects of the environment...change depending on what emerging psychological properties refract them" (p. 65). The *social situation of development* captures the unique characteristics of each child and the unique cultural setting in which that child interacts. The child refracts the social and material environment based on their *social situation of development*. The concept of the *social situation of development* makes this

qualitative relation between child and environment visible. Rather than a universal view of ages and stages or milestones that children pass through, Vygotsky's theory of child development invites us to think in a localized and more specific way about children's development - Who they are, what they bring and how they relate to and experience their social and material environment. "Consequently, even in those cases where environmental influences remain objectively unchanged in terms of their content [e.g. iPad and soft toys], these effects will have different impacts on children due to changes taking place within them" (Bozhovich, 2008, p. 66). This was evident when Owen was focused on playing with the soft toys and Ginger was learning how to use the software on the iPad to make a movie using the soft toys. In order to understand the influence of the environment, not only do we need to examine the motive orientation (play or learning) of both Owen and Ginger, and the "changes that have taken place in the environment ... (e.g., the transition from kindergarten to first grade) but also the changes that have taken place within children themselves that condition the nature of the environmental influences on their subsequent mental development" (p. 66).

Research by Hedegaard (2002) has shown that children who have a motive orientation to learning, but who are in kindergarten where the focus is play, negatively experience their environment when only play opportunities are offered to them. Similarly, children who transition into school and who only want to play, find the environment with its focus on learning to read and write difficult. But what do we mean by a motive orientation to learning and a motive orientation to play? To understand motive orientation in relation to progression in development, we must examine the concept of *leading activity*.

Leading Activity and Motive Orientation

The concept of leading activity was referenced by Vygotsky (1966) in relation to play. He suggested that play was the leading activity of preschool children. However, it was Leontiev (1978) who further developed this concept in relation to his theory of activity (see also Veresov, 2006), which Elkonin (1999) later conceptualised as a system of leading activities linked to particular periods in a child's life. The periods (infancy, early childhood, preschool, early school, early adolescence, later adolescence), epochs (early childhood, childhood, adolescence) and phases within periods, each contain a motivational element that represents a

unique characteristic of a person's life. Play is but one of these motivational elements. These periods, epochs and phases parallel Vygotsky's (1998) age periodisation of development. However, as Hedegaard and Fleer (2013) state "A child's developmental age period is not the same as the child's biological age. A child's developmental age or age period reflects the child's qualitative relation to his or her environment and depends on the child's motivational orientation" (pp. 13-14).

Progression occurs when a child's motives change, such as when children's attention is focused more on learning than play. Important here is how leading activities with their central motive are always conceptualised as the *relations between the child and the society* within which they live. For instance, Hedegaard (2012) has argued that a "child's motives are related to what is meaningful and important for them" and that "A child's motive is related to the child's intentions in specific situations, but a person's motives surpass the specific situation and can be seen as the dynamic that characterise specific activities across different situations" (p. 134). Consequently, an activity is only motivating for a child if the activity setting is linked with the child's already developed motives. In the case of Owen, his motive orientation was towards play, and he was not interested to learn how to use the software - although he liked pressing the camera button. For Ginger, she found the activity motivating because she was interested to learn how to make a movie and represent the story in a new way. She was not oriented to playing with the objects but rather she was motivated towards using the objects to achieve the goals of the activity setting. Hedegaard (2012) has argued that in educational settings it is important to be aware of the "child's motive orientation as well as directing the introduced activities towards supporting new motives" (p. 135). The social and material environment that the child participates in creates the conditions for a change in motive orientation, and this localized cultural context acts as the source of the child's development. However, motive orientation on its own does not explain the dialectical movement needed for development to occur. We now turn to the concept of the relations between the ideal and real forms of development.

Relations between the Ideal and Real Forms

Vygotsky (1994) stated that for the social and material environment to be the source of a

child's development then what is to be developed must already exist in the child's environment. Learning to talk is an example of the relations between the ideal (language of the child's culture) and real form (what is possible for that child at that moment) of a child's development. In order to learn to talk, children must be in a rich language environment specific to their society. Infants are not expected to begin speaking in an ideal form, but are surrounded by people who engage them meaningfully in social situations where the ideal form of language is available to them. Having the ideal form in the child's environment affords development of exactly that which is valued and needed to successfully participate in a particular community. Vygotsky (1994) noted that "Something which is supposed to take shape at the very end of development, somehow influences the very first steps in this development" (p. 346). This contrasts with the belief of matching a child's environment with where s/he is developmentally, as underpins developmentally appropriate practice (DAP). For example, in a context where developmentally appropriate practice is supported, the introduction of digital technologies would be done in a developmentally appropriate way, matched by the age and characteristics of the universal child (e.g. www.naeyc.org/content/technology-and-young-children), for instance: "Developmentally appropriate practices must guide decisions about whether and when to integrate technology and interactive media into early childhood programs." (National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2012: 5).

What children experience in their environment is based on what that particular community values, and that will be different from one community to the next. For instance, what is valued in Bangladesh will be different to what is valued in Korea. While there will be some similarities, there will also be many differences in the social and material environments of families. What constitutes the ideal form and how families orient their children to these values and beliefs in relation to the child's real form of development will also be different. The relations between an ideal and real form of development as a concept, helps explain how children enter kindergarten and schooling with different values, beliefs and competencies. This also explains why entering school for some children will be a major crisis because their home experiences maybe very different to the schooling practices that they meet.

A cultural-historical view of child development acknowledges that the ideal form of what is valued by families and the community at large must be available in the child's social and

material environment. It acknowledges that the relations between the ideal and real form of a child's development on entering school must be conceptualised as part of the pedagogical practice. This means understanding the social situation of development, the child's motive orientation, and finding out what might be the relations between the child's real form of development in relation to the ideal form of development expected for that particular community.

In the example that follows, the teacher is holding a digital audio recorder, and the children are poised ready to role-play. The children are going to make an animation of the fairytale of the 3 Billy Goats Gruff. To do this, they digitally record their role-play, and use this as the 'voice-over' on their digital animation. Through this example, the relations between the ideal form of the fairytale and the children's role-play of the fairytale as the real form of their development are made visible. Here we see how Alicia (age 5.2) supports the other children (Timmy, age 4.8; Eliza, age 5.0) with remembering the lines in the fairytale.

Role-playing the fairytale of the Billy Goats Gruff. Four children and their teacher are in a separate room from the general preschool open area. They have placed a table in the middle of the room, which they use as the bridge. One child, Timmy is under the table roleplaying being the troll. The other three children are acting as the Billy Goats Gruff and they are lined up on one side of the bridge, waiting to cross. Alicia who knows the storyline well, supports the other children as they say their lines. She begins by asking the teacher, "Tell me when to go ok?" The children then steps up onto the stage in turn and stomps their feet, as the teacher kneels close by recording their voices and sound effects.

Timmy: *What was that? Who was it that tiptoed on my bridge?*

Eliza: *It's only me* (in soft voice)

Timmy: *The big Billy Goat*

Eliza: *The little Billy Goat*

Alicia then whispers to Eliza "*Gruff*" which she then says.

Eliza: *Gruff*

Alicia then tells the boy his line "*I'm going to eat you*"

Timmy: *I'm going to eat you*

Eliza: *Please don't eat me. I'm only skin and bones*

Alicia whispers the words, "*Big brother*" to prompt Eliza into saying the next part of the fairytale.

Eliza: *My brother is much bigger than me*

Alicia waves Eliza off the stage and then says, "*It's your turn*" to the next child (role play continues until story concludes).

In this example we note that the ideal form of the fairytale is in the mind of the children as they actively stomp, and recite the repetitive lines of the fairytale (i.e. *Who was it that tiptoed on my bridge?*). It is Alicia who actively prompts the other children, suggesting she has a sense of the full fairytale script that is being enacted. She orchestrates the actions, and prompts the repetitive lines in turn for each 'character' (child) as they approach the 'bridge' (table).

Their real form of development is shown through their ability to re-tell the fairytale: as demonstrated through the role-play actions. But their actively is supported through the whole script (ideal form). The children do not have to negotiate the play, as occurs in free play. They do not have to invent a storyline to role-play. Their actions and what they say (as the real form) are always in relation to the known fairytale (ideal form). Alicia with the ideal form in mind is able to direct the play so that the real form of the role-play can occur. This is also in the context of the teacher being present and who is audio recording their play, but who is also monitoring the "ideal form" of the fairytale in relation to the "real form" of the play being enacted by the children (i.e. what each child was doing and saying).

Using the concept of the relations between ideal and real form in the example above, concretely demonstrates Vygotsky's theory as localized to this community, and to this culture where fairytales and digital technologies were valued and being supported. Rather than analyzing these children's development in relation to particular stages of development as defined by Piaget, the children's development was being considered as a relation between the ideal and real form of acting out the fairytale. The children's development was not conceptualised as stages of development, as might be constituted through Piaget's views of the ideal form of development for 4 and 5 year old children. Rather, Vygotsky's theory invites us to consider the ideal form in relation to what is valued by a particular group of people. That

is, the concept of ideal form has to be conceptualized in relation to a specific group of children and people, and by doing this the concept pushes against a universalization of child development. The relations between the ideal form (fairytale) and the real form (how each of the children were role-playing) is a dialectical movement because in the collective context, children continue to take on more dimensions of the real form through everyday life or through the experiences provided in kindergartens. These are microscopic movements, where over time children move closer to the ideal form of development that the particular institution and community values and says are important for their children to develop. These movements are not dramatic crises, as might constitute a big change, such as starting school or moving house. However, a performance of the fairytale in a public event may constitute the latter, thus propelling children into a situation where these new demands mean more attention may be paid to developing a closer production of the ideal form of a public presentation. The example was provided here to illustrate a small cognitive demand that is in the process of development. It is not as significant as might be the ideal form of language development, as children learn to talk. But the example is illustrative of one of the central concepts of Vygotsky's theory of child development, where in everyday mundane life, opportunities for development are provided. The concept of the relations between the ideal and the real form conceptualizes development in everyday life as microscopic movements, where a child's motive to play or learning explains their engagement and contribution, as without these concepts, we have no way of explaining how everyday life and everyday practices in kindergartens over time act as a source of a child's development.

Conclusion

Vygotsky's theory of child development invites us to conceptualise the process of development in a dialectical way, as both microscopic and critical periods, where development is not just an "adding on to what is there" but rather a qualitative change in the child. Vygotsky's theory of child development should be thought about as a system of concepts, and in the format of this short paper, it has only been possible to discuss some concepts briefly - such as, the social situation of development, leading activity of play and

learning in relation to motives, and the relations between the ideal and real form of development. These concepts do not describe particular forms of development per se, but rather they act as tools for understanding the process of a child's development. The content of that development must be localized and specific to the community in which the child is living, learning and developing. We used iPads and fairytales as illustrations only to explain the concepts, and not as the content of development. Rather, development should be viewed as specific to a cultural community or a specific family.

The specific content of the concepts is conceptualized differently to the construct of developmentally appropriate practice or stages of development. Rather, a cultural-historical view of development invites each community to state what is the ideal form of development for them. In most cases, this won't be Piaget's stages of development. Similarly, the ideal form of development and how one should teach children in the early childhood period, won't always be benchmarked against US frameworks of developmentally appropriate practice. On the contrary, the ideal forms of development will be localized to what matters for particular communities.

A revolutionary view of development as discussed by Vygotsky also encourages us to notice the relations between the ideal form and what is the child's current form of development. In this conceptualization of development, early childhood educators look closely at what each child brings to a particular social situation. But rather than focus on the child's interests or focus on documenting what they can or cannot do, a cultural-historical reading of development examines how the child's social situation of development refracts the everyday social and material situation. This perspective recognizes that the same situation will be experienced differently by different children, because they each have a different social situation of development.

Taken together, the concepts introduced in this paper act as the tools for explaining the process of development. The concepts provide a useful toolkit for determining the content of development that is specific to particular communities. The concepts spoke to both traditional practices, such as the role-playing of fairytales, and also the use of new cultural technologies, such as iPads and movie making software. Both of these practices uniquely develop children. Culturally specific ways of acting and being, create the conditions for children's development, and therefore the theory of child development used in a community must capture and

foreground the relations between that ideal and the real forms of children's development that are evident in that same community. A cultural-historical view of development supports a localized and culturally nuanced view of child development. By its very conceptualisation, it pushes against those theories of development that were researched and theorized in countries outside the Southern regions of the world. A cultural-historical view of child development gives the early childhood community different tools for thinking differently about child development, and through this keeps at bay those universal theories of development that have traditionally colonized how we as educators think about young children's development.

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