

Case Study Vignette #2 - Kayla

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Kayla is an 8-10-year elementary student. She lives with her mom and tends to be a loner. She learns best individually, in a whole group, hands-on, when problem solving, or by finding creative solutions. Kayla lacks self-esteem and a sense of self. This leads to difficulty with peer interactions and cooperative learning. She also tends to struggle with challenging tasks and has difficulty with academic testing. To help Kayla to grow socially and academically it is important to develop her social skills and sense of belonging to boost her self-confidence and promote her intrinsic motivation to overcome challenges and feel empowered to be successful in academic and social areas of education.

DevelopmentPiaget's theory

Piaget's theory is based on patterns of thinking, which are referred to as stages (Eggen & Kauchak, 2016, p. 49). The stages are Sensorimotor (0-2 years), Preoperational (2-7 years), Concrete Operational (7-11), Formal Operational (11-Adult) (Eggen & Kauchak, 2016, p. 50). Three ideas that dictate a change in stage are: 1. Individuals pass through stages gradually and each is a building block for the next. 2. The stages are passed through in order, but at different rates. 3. Each stage represents a difference in thought, not in the amount of knowledge (Eggen & Kauchak, 2016, p. 49). An example is that children in the Preoperational stage, cannot comprehend that liquid in different shape containers can equal the same amount, yet the child knows what the liquid is and containers are, then when the child reaches the Concrete Operational stage, the same knowledge concerning the liquid and containers is present, yet the child is able to deduce that the liquid equals the same regardless of the container shape (Eggen & Kauchak, 2016, p. 46).

Piaget's theory also states that children create mental structures, called schemas to understand experiences and with each age group this mental structure will vary (Eggen & Kauchak, 2016, p. 46). Schema is the building blocks needed for thinking and as the child ages their thinking becomes more sophisticated (Eggen & Kauchak, 2016, p. 46). Schema is built through experiences. To build the schema needed to participate fully in collaborative groups the child must have had similar experiences. Furthermore, through schema a sense of equilibrium or cognitive balance is reached (Eggen & Kauchak, 2016, p. 46). Social interactions can challenge equilibrium and individuals are motivated to regain it by reevaluating what is known about a subject and accepting the new thinking (Eggen & Kauchak, 2016, p. 46).

Application:

Kayla has difficulty understanding her peers. She struggles with developing close friendships, resolving peer conflicts, and communicating. The teacher must develop Kayla's social schema. Kayla has lived with her mom and no siblings, this does not lend to a lot social interaction. Kayla also is not involved in any extra-curricular activities, therefore her only social interaction is limited to school, which does not allow for the necessary peer interaction time. Kayla has not reached a sense of equilibrium regarding peer interactions and collaborative group work. To reach cognitive balance she must build up her social skills and ability to understand the perspectives of other students.

Strategy:

A strategy that can be used to build up Kayla's social schema is role-playing. Role-playing can be done as a small or whole group exercise. It can be teacher or student led. Students can be provided a problem and as a group must work together to determine and act out the

solution. This would help Kayla build peer understanding by providing an opportunity to socialize. Discussions focused on one problem that the group must solve together will assist Kayla gaining insight into peer perspectives.

Vygotsky's Sociocultural theory

Vygotsky's Sociocultural theory explores how the aspects of social interaction, language, and culture assist in learning (Eggen & Kauchak, 2016, p. 58). Culturally relevant ideas are internalized by individuals through social interactions (Eggen & Kauchak, 2016, p. 58). These interactions between a more knowledgeable individual links the knowledge gleaned and allows the person learning to fully understand the concept (Eggen & Kauchak, 2016, p. 59). Language allows learners to access previously learned information and to advance understanding and development of the information (Eggen & Kauchak, 2016, p. 59). Language is also a cognitive tool that can be used make sense of the information and connect it the idea, concept, or knowledge (Eggen & Kauchak, 2016, p. 59).

Individuals learn best when interacting with a more knowledgeable person working within their zone of proximal development or the zone in which the range of tasks can be accomplished with assistance, but not alone (Eggen & Kauchak, 2016, p. 60). It is important as a teacher to keep learning within the zone of proximal development or provide scaffolding if outside of it. When learning is outside of the zone of proximal development and scaffolding is not provided the student can become discouraged and feel unable to be successful.

Application:

Vygotsky's theory can be applied to Kayla by providing tasks that are within her zone of proximal development. Since Kayla tends to give up easily on tasks that are challenging,

providing tasks that can be accomplished with teacher, peer, or group support will build Kayla's self-esteem. Kayla needs to know that she can accomplish the task provided with a bit of support.

Strategy:

Scaffolding is a great strategy to assist Kayla when she has challenging tasks that are outside of zone of proximal development. Scaffolding can come from a peer, collaborative group, the teacher, or an instructional aid. Providing modeling, instructional aids, asking questions, or doing a think-a-loud can give Kayla the support she needs for cognitive growth (Eggen & Kauchak, 2016, p. 61).

Erikson's psychosocial theory

We all have the same basic needs and our needs are centered on human relations that span our life-time in eight stages, this was Erikson's belief (Eggen & Kauchak, 2016, p.94). These eight stages are characterized by a crisis in which the individual must resolve to move on to the next stage (Eggen & Kauchak, 2016, p. 94). The resolution may be the socially accepted norm, or it may not, the resolution may vary for everyone. The stages include Trust vs. Mistrust (0-1 year), Autonomy vs. Shame (1-3 years), Initiative vs. Guilt (3-6 years), Industry vs. Inferiority (6-12 years), Identify vs. Confusion (12-18 years), Intimacy vs. Isolation (Young adult), Generativity vs. Stagnation (Adulthood), and Integrity vs. Despair (Old age) (Eggen & Kauchak, 2016, p. 95). Not everyone successfully resolves every stage, for instance a person may not have intimacy in their life by having a significant other, but they can still lead a happy life (Eggen & Kauchak, 2016, p. 95). Though some critique Erikson's work based on the facts that his work may not relate to today's society, he mostly studied boys, or by the lack of cultural awareness, his work can help understand students (Eggen & Kauchak, 2016, p. 94).

Application:

Using Erikson's psychosocial theory through the teacher lens, it can be assessed that Kayla is struggling in the Industry vs. Inferiority stage. Kayla gives up easily on challenging tasks and feels inferior to other students. This sense of inferiority is affecting her social and academic performances and growth. When it comes to areas that she has done poorly on in the past, she does not put forth the effort to make gains, she has no sense of initiative. Kayla needs to develop on a personal level to resolve the Industry vs. Inferiority stage.

Strategy:

To help Kayla to overcome the Industry vs. Inferiority stage a strategy the teacher can use is goal setting. By setting goals that are within her zone of proximal development, Kayla can develop a sense of competence (Eggen & Kauchak, 2016, p. 95). It is apparent that a pattern of failure has caused Kayla to feel inferior, therefore by proving tasks in her zone of proximal development or by providing scaffolding to reach goals, Kayla can feel industrious, resolve her conflict, and move on to her next stage (Eggen & Kauchak, 2016, p. 95).

LearningSocial Cognitive Theory

Emerging from the work of Albert Bandura (1925-), Social Cognitive Theory, "focuses on changes in behavior, thinking, and affect that result from observing others" (Eggen & Kauchak, 2016, p. 241). These changes are not directly linked to reinforcers or punishers as is often the case with behavioral theories, rather the changes are first processed and stored cognitively creating expectations (Eggen & Kauchak, 2016, p. 241). It is expected that the behavior or thought will be met with a certain expectation, for instance when a teacher states, "I really like the way Juanita has quickly put away her materials and is ready to listen," and other

students do the same the students expect to also be praised for the putting away their materials (Eggen & Kauchak, 2016, p. 241).

There are many ways that Social Cognitive Theory influences education. Teachers use the example above of praising student behavior they want replicated, teachers strengthen inhibition by reprimanding students as needed, and use modeling to demonstrate to students how to think out or complete an assignment or how to handle certain situations (Eggen & Kauchak, 2016, p. 245). There are three forms of modeling Direct, Symbolic, and Synthesized (Eggen & Kauchak, 2016, p. 243). Direct modeling is imitating behaviors directly from people, Symbolic modeling is imitating behaviors or thinking from people in books, plays, movies, television, ect., and Synthesized modeling is using a behavior learned from a person in a different setting (Eggen & Kauchak, 2016, p. 243). Another way to model is through cognitive modeling, which is when the thought process is verbalized while demonstrating skills (Eggen & Kauchak, 2016, p. 243). “Modeling is one of the most important mechanisms used to change learner behavior in applied behavior analysis” (Eggen & Kauchak, 2016, p. 244).

Application:

Kayla is a young girl that is struggling with peer interactions and completing challenging tasks. Social Cognitive theory is learning through observing others, processing the information, creating expectations, and then repeating the learned behavior or way of thinking. For Kayla to learn through Social Cognitive theory she must observe others. Since she tends to keep to herself, it may be that she internalizes her thinking more, rather than paying attention to others. Drawing Kayla’s attention to the behaviors of others would be allow her to learn through modeling.

Strategy:

Direct and cognitive modeling can assist Kayla. The teacher can model how to complete an assignment that Kayla struggled with by articulating the thought process while showing how the assignment should be completed. If the teacher knows that the assignment may be a challenge, then an example could be modeled prior to giving Kayla the assignment. To assist with collaborative groups, the teacher can use the fish bowl approach. Placing a group in a proverbial fish bowl demonstrating, with guidance how to complete a task. This form of direct modeling will show Kayla exactly how to act, react, or complete the task.

Maslow's hierarchy

According to Maslow's hierarchy of needs students must have their deficiency needs met before their growth needs (Eggen & Kauchak, 2016, p. 400). The deficiency needs are survival, safety, belonging, and self-esteem (Eggen & Kauchak, 2016, p. 399). Students often enter the classroom lacking one or more of these deficiency needs. It is a teacher's responsibility to meet these needs to their best ability. This can be as simple as being sure the student gets a breakfast from the cafeteria or that the teacher gives the child a hug and tells them how proud they are for completing their homework. At times there are bigger issues that must be dealt with, whatever the case maybe it is vital to fulfill these needs so students can focus on growing academically in school.

Maslow further states that there is a Need for Self-Determination, which includes the needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness (Eggen & Kauchak, 2016, p. 400). Individuals need to demonstrate that they are competent or good at something, students that do well academically, tend to be more successful than those that struggle (Eggen & Kauchak, 2016, p. 401). People also need to have the ability to control their environment, this is called autonomy (Eggen &

Kauchak, 2016, p. 401). In the classroom this could be the ability to change seats, move to a quiet section of the classroom, or lay their head down if they need a moment of contemplation. Synonymous to belonging, relatedness is feeling connected to others and worthy of their respect or love (Eggen & Kauchak, 2016, p. 401). When students are self-determined they are more successful, intrinsically motivated, have better literacy skills, and are more active and healthy in life (Eggen & Kauchak, 2016, p. 402).

Application:

Some students do not have adequate food, shelter, or a safe place to live, while others may need to feel connected like in Kayla's case. Kayla lacks a sense of belonging or relatedness. Kayla also struggles with competence since she does not do well in reading and math. The teacher must do what she can to meet these needs to help Kayla to become more socially and academically successful.

Strategy:

To help Kayla the teacher can start by building up Kayla's competence in the areas she is not academically proficient, reading and math. The teacher can pull a small group to work on rudimentary skills as necessary, tutor her after school or refer Kayla to an after-school program. The teacher can also provide opportunities in class for Kayla to demonstrate her competence whenever possible. Furthermore, the teacher can work with the school counselor to create a friendship club that Kayla and other students with similar needs can be part of. The group could even focus on math and reading skills, thus building competence and relatedness.

Synthesis

Helping Kayla to be successful is the goal. Kayla's strengths are her ability to problem solve and think of creative solutions, as well as her aptitude for individualized, whole group, and hands-on learning. Kayla's areas to improve are developing social skills, peer understanding and collaborative skills, make academic gains in reading and math, intrinsic motivation and initiative, and confidence in task completion. The teacher can create a plan that will incorporate strategies to help Kayla, these strategies should include, role-playing, scaffolding, and goal-setting to help Kayla overcome her development areas of concern, difficulty understanding peers, completing tasks, and being more industrious by building intrinsic motivation. Modeling and providing the opportunity to join an academically driven friendship group can help with developing peer interaction and collaborative group skills and a sense of belonging or relatedness. To capitalize on Kayla's strengths the teacher can provide project-based assignments and assessments that will allow Kayla to demonstrate her competence which will further the growth of Kayla's self-efficacy. With a supportive teacher that puts these strategies in place, not only Kayla, but other students alike will flourish and become successful, fulfilled individuals.

Challenges

The challenges that the teacher and Kayla will face are many. For the teacher there is the simple fact that a school day is only so long, and Kayla is not the only student in need of support. To overcome this the teacher must work smarter, not harder to incorporate the strategies and support Kayla needs. The teacher can group students with like needs and group multiple strategies to each assignment. For instance, a collaborative assignment can be completed with Kayla's small group, it can first be cognitively modeled, the fish bowl approach can demonstrate how to behave in the group, roles can be assigned to each group member and role-played, the

teacher can provide scaffolding by providing Kayla with an instructional aid to complete the task, the assignment can be used to help Kayla accomplish a predetermined goal, and when Kayla completes the task she will feel a sense of competence and belonging because she finished it with a group of friends. In that one assignment all strategies can be incorporated. Kayla will also face challenges. She will be taken out of comfort zone and will have to learn to watch what others are doing to learn from modeling. This could be a goal that is set in place, Kayla will join in more often to group and collaborative work. Helping Kayla meet her goals will in turn assist the teacher in feeling competent.

Conclusion

In every classroom, every student needs support of some sort. Creating strategies to support students is the first step. Then grouping students with like needs can assist the teacher in meeting the needs of all students. Theorists such as Piaget, Vygotsky, and Erikson can help to understand student development. Their theories can shed light on student behavior and provide ways to assist students. Furthermore, Social Cognitive theory and Maslow's hierarchy of needs helps teachers to recognize how best to help students learn. By identifying the theories most closely related to a student's needs the teacher can development strategies to promote student success.

Theory	Application	Strategy
<u>Piaget's theory</u>	difficulty understanding her peers	role-playing
<u>Vygotsky's Sociocultural theory</u>	providing tasks that are within her zone of proximal development.	Scaffolding
<u>Erikson's psychosocial theory</u>	Industry vs. Inferiority	goal setting
<u>Social Cognitive Theory</u>	peer interactions and completing challenging tasks	Modeling
<u>Maslow's hierarchy</u>	of belonging or relatedness	building belonging or relatedness

Reference

Eggen, P. D., & Kauchak, D. P. (2016). *Educational psychology: Windows on classrooms* (10th ed.).

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