

Implementing the concept of education in early childhood education

Sabine Gauß, Theresia Wollnitz

ABSTRACT

When the education plans and programmes were rolled out in Germany's federal states, they included guidelines for the work of full day childcare centres. Since then, full day childcare centres have been referred to as “educational institutions”. But does the discourse on early childhood education qualify as an educational issue from a philosophy of education perspective? To answer this question, we shall start with a historical overview of the concept of education, in which we present the interpretations of several relevant education philosophers. After that, we will describe the legal early childhood education and care mandate for full day childcare centres, which will help us further define the concept of education from an education studies perspective. We will then discuss and explore the question posed at the beginning of this paper with reference to the features fleshed out in the opening chapters as characteristic of the concept of education.

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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1. Introduction

Historical development
in former East and West
Germany

In Germany, childcare had always been a private matter: in most cases, it was mothers or other close family members who cared for small children. In the 1960s, the former German Democratic Republic (GDR) began developing its childcare system. As early as 1970, childcare services were provided for 65% of children from three years of age until school age and for 24% of children under three years of age (cf. Rauschenbach 2009, 139 ff.). From the very beginning, kindergartens were part of the education system and, in the 1980s, the system expanded to include crèches as well. In West Germany, by contrast, it was not until 1970 that the Federal Council (Bundesrat) established kindergartens as an elementary stage of education; before that, kindergartens had been regarded as a sort of emergency social welfare service. In the former West Germany in the late 1980s, when mothers were not working, 99% of children under three years and 88% of three- to six-year-old children were cared for at home; when mothers were working, 75% of children in both of these age groups were cared for at home as well (cf. Tietze 2006, 89 f.). In the 1980s, the first efforts were made in the former West Germany to pass a law entitling all children aged three and over to nursery care. These efforts failed in 1989 due to reservations on the part of the individual federal states. Since 1 January 1996, children aged three years and older have been legally entitled to full day childcare centre (cf. Rauschenbach 2009, 141 f.).

Demands of the
labour market

Due to the increasing number of well-educated young women and the labour market's demands for professionally and temporally flexible employees and the consequent difficulty of reconciling work and family life, Germany has been under pressure to restructure its childcare network.

Equal opportunity – but how?

Since then, the debate surrounding non-familial care of preschool-aged children has shifted from the necessity of such care to figuring out how all children, regardless of their background, can be guaranteed an equal opportunity for a smooth entry into school. To achieve this it will be necessary to tackle issues such as expanding the number of childcare centres as well as increasing the number of hours of care and education services provided, among other things (cf. Rauschenbach 2009, 145 ff.).

Child day care

In the process of planning the expansion of childcare services for children under age three, the field of child day care gained in importance. This model, as a type of semi-public childcare service for children under three, has been establishing itself in Germany since the 1970s. Up to that point, it had been described as a “loosely structured subsystem of youth welfare services established in a field of semi-professionalism and characterised by low transparency, both quantitatively and qualitatively, and limited perception of public responsibility” (Tietze

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2006, 87).¹ “According to the Federal Statistical Office of Germany, as of 1 March 2013, about 596,300 children under three years of age were being cared for at a full day childcare centre or by a family day care (Tagesmutter or Tagesvater) in addition to being educated and cared for by their parents. In comparison to March 2012, this is an increase of roughly 37,000 children. Among all children under three years of age in Germany, the proportion being cared for in full day childcare centres or in publicly subsidised child day care (care rate) was 29.3% as of 1 March 2013, whereas in 2012 it was 27.6%” (Federal Statistical Office of Germany 2013).

2. A historical overview of the concept of education

When Czech philosopher and educator John Amos Comenius (1592–1670) wrote that education cannot shape anything that cannot shape itself, he was referring to self-education processes (cf. Bumann 2008, 11). He went on to say that one’s entire life is an educational process. What other concepts of education should be included in a historical overview of past philosophers of education? How was the concept of education seen historically? In the following, the theses of several well-known philosophers of education will be outlined.

Immanuel Kant

Like Comenius, German philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) talks about children’s self-education processes: the child is motivated from within to learn, achieve higher goals and challenge him- or herself. According to Kant, children can only acquire knowledge through unstructured and playful learning when they are free to do so; additional prerequisites for education are freedom of thought and action. He believes that education – especially moral education – produces individuals who are in a position to lead their own lives. Accordingly, when a child exhibits independent thought and actions rather than just reproducing external ones, it is a mark of education. Moreover, Kant also argues that a person can only truly become a person through education. He talks about cultivation, which he sees as the development of a person’s intellectual and physical abilities and/or skills. Here the goal is to acquire knowledge and abilities considered important for the person’s cultural and social nature. He mentions a number of skills such as training one’s memory or speaking abilities, but his argument is that, above all, the goal is learning to think (cf. Gudjons 2006, 79 f.).

Jean-Jacques Rousseau

Another philosopher who writes on the subject of education is Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778). He mentions the developmental stage or maturity level of a child (or person), arguing that an individual will only absorb learning material if he or she is ready to do so. Like the previous two philosophers, he also talks about a person’s own efforts in the educational process. He also adds autonomy into the mix. As with Kant, Rousseau views freedom and spontaneity as prerequisites for education (cf. Sichtermann 2007, 20 f.; Gudjons 2006, 82 f.). He believed that

¹ All quotations from German source texts have been translated ad hoc.

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children are not merely small vessels that could or should be filled with formulae and rhetoric. Rather, he saw them as people in the making – people who only absorb learning material when they are mature enough for it (cf. Erenz & Ullrich 2007, 22). Rousseau viewed education from the perspective of the child. For him, education was the process of becoming a person. He saw self-action, or acting of one's own accord, as an integral part of education – the child autonomously explores and processes the environment in which he or she lives. Self-action and autonomy are complementary here: anyone who is autonomous can also act of his or her own volition.

Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi

Expanding on Rousseau's ideas, Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi (1746–1827) elaborates the criterion of maturity level with regard to adapting learning material. Teaching style and learning material must be adapted to the child's or person's age and developmental stage. He developed the elementary method. According to this method, the learning material and instructor's teaching style are based on the maturity of the child's cognitive faculties. Pestalozzi also incorporates a facet that had not been mentioned by other philosophers of education up to that point. He states that in order for a person to educate him- or herself, there must be an interlocutor. According to Pestalozzi, a child can only truly learn to become a person in interactions that are face to face and heart to heart. In addition, he believes a person's education is never finished but rather continues over a lifetime (cf. Sichter mann 2007, 22 f.) – that life itself is what educates a person. Finally, he writes, education encompasses not only intellectual or mental skills but also emotional and practical ones: it is about the education of the mind, the heart and the hand.

Wilhelm von Humboldt

Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767–1835) also calls education a lifelong process. Humboldt developed educational guidelines that are still used today. He is thought to be the one who, around the year 1800, introduced the concept of education known in German as *Bildung* into the pedagogical jargon (cf. Baumann 2008, 10). He too considered self-education a requirement for and of education. For him, one marker of education is the ability to establish the relationship between one's own ego and the world. Humboldt did not believe that education is the mere acquisition of knowledge. Like Pestalozzi, he argues that education is only possible with the help of an interlocutor. He sees education as a path to oneself. He also identifies individuality, totality and universality as markers or criteria of education. He believed education should, as a matter of principle, be available to all people (cf. Gudjons 2006, 89 f.). Humboldt's educational ideas emerged out of the German new humanism movement, which deemed individuality the greatest good of humankind.

Wolfgang Klafki

According to the German educational theorist Wolfgang Klafki (1927), the goal of education is maturity, or adulthood. He focused on bringing together two types of education that had until then been seen as opposites – namely, substantive education, i.e., the material pupils are required to learn, and formal education, i.e., behaviour and conduct that is likewise important for pupils. He characterises

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education as a process whereby an individual absorbs educational content and appropriates it for him- or herself. Education is always material and formal. What he calls subject-related education refers to a person knowing what learning methods work best for him or her, i.e., he or she has learned to learn or has mastered learning methods. Material education describes the learning of a person who has a lot of encyclopaedic or cultural knowledge. This form of education might be called object-related. Klafki defines the education process itself as the absorbing and appropriating of content. This absorbing and appropriating of content is, however, always associated with the shaping, developing and honing of physical, emotional and intellectual skills. We have seen similar ideas in Humboldt's writing. One marker of education is the capacity for self-determination. Only once a person has the ability to decide for him- or herself can he or she be considered educated. He also sees co-determination, i.e., when a person has the capacity to participate in a group, as a criterion or marker of education. The ability to show solidarity with peers, to act for and with others, is another criterion of education. At the end of a person's formal or general education, he or she should have critical thinking skills and knowledge, and think and act in a self-aware and socially minded way (cf. Baumgart 2007, 267 f.).

Markers and criteria of education – from a historical perspective

- *Education begins with birth and continues throughout life*
- *Education is self-education and self-action*
- *Relationships are a prerequisite for education*
- *Education is the key to understanding the reality in which one lives*
- *Maturity as the goal of education*
- *Education is infinite – education for all*

3. An analysis of the concept of education based on today's early childhood education discourse

In the following chapter, the concept of education will be defined from an education studies perspective, using the official early childhood education and care mandate², the 12th Federal Report on Children and Youth and the education plans of selected federal German states as references.

² Officially known as the *Bildungs-, Erziehungs- und Betreuungsauftrag*, this mandate is, in fact, made up of three components: *Bildung*, *Erziehung* and *Betreuung*. While it is fairly straightforward to translate *Betreuung* as “care”, the German words *Bildung* and *Erziehung* are not easily rendered into two distinct English words in this context. *Bildung* generally refers to “education” in the sense of someone who is educated, learned or cultivated; *Erziehung* tends to refer to “education” in terms of conduct, upbringing or even socialisation. For that reason, when we speak of the mandate in English, we use the term “early childhood education” to encompass both *Bildung* und *Erziehung*. However, when specific differences between the two facets of education are being explained, we will use the German term *Erziehung*.

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The early childhood education and care mandate

Child day care and full day childcare centres, both of which are often placed in the same category of “day care”, constitute the first “public” educational institution. The legal grounds for this were established in the 8th edition of the German Social Code (*Sozialgesetzbuch*), and the individual federal states and municipalities have been responsible for its implementation (cf. Rauschenbach 2009, 138). In Section 22 of the Child and Youth Welfare Act (*Kinder- und Jugendhilfegesetz*), full day childcare centres are described as facilities “where children spend a part or all of the day and are fostered in groups” (Stascheit 2009, 1184). What, exactly, is fostered? – The social, emotional, physical and intellectual development of the child into an autonomous and social personality. What’s more, the legislation calls for the child’s custodians to be supported in their efforts to educate and care for the children. This work should be based on the child’s individual stage of development and interests as well as the needs of the child’s family. Furthermore, Section 24 contains a clause stating that from the age of three years, all children are legally entitled to attend a full day childcare centre (cf. Stascheit 2009, 1184 f.). In 2007, the federal government and states agreed on the “crèche compromise”, which set out the plan to expand childcare to cover 35% of children under three years of age and guarantee children the right to childcare from the age of one year, to be achieved by August 2013 (cf. Sell 2011, 8f.).

The concept of education in education studies

Education studies distinguishes between three dimensions of education: formal education, which is hierarchically structured, mandatory and oriented towards certifications; non-formal education, or a voluntarily arranged offer of education and learning; and informal education, which occurs spontaneously and unintentionally in the everyday life of a child. Education is always embedded in social relationships because it is in interactions with others that the child develops an understanding of him- or herself and his or her environment. The child has been perceiving, differentiating and making sense of his or her impressions and experiences since birth (cf. Colberg-Schrader 2003, 266 f.). In line with that, education must be seen as a process in which the child autonomously and actively educates him- or herself (cf. Fthenakis 2003, 27). “The idea of the competent child – one who takes active part in his or her development and learning – is at the heart of this understanding of education” (ibid., 12). Children “need a stimulating learning environment just as much as they need loving adults who provide care, guidance and emotional support for their activities.” (Colberg-Schrader 2003, 268). The child’s personal development begins at home. The full day childcare centre builds on and supports this development (cf. ibid., 266 f.).

The triad of education, *Erziehung* and care

In Germany, the concepts of education, *Erziehung* and care were increasingly differentiated, with their functions being allocated to separate institutions: care took place at home, *Erziehung* at the kindergarten and education at school. Thomas Rauschenbach argues for “an integrative reformatting of this conceptual triad (...); their inherent interconnectedness – in early childhood – has proven a decisive structural resource and educational qualification for growing up” (Rauschenbach 2009, 104). The term “care” refers to the provision of physical and emotion-

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al support to the child as well as the development and stability of relationships. Rauschenbach considers care an indispensable “foundation of early childhood development” (ibid., 105). He says that *Erziehung* “continues to be an elemental and vital dimension of the development of children and teenagers” (ibid., 105). In this process, the child should develop his or her sense of self-identity and moral judgement, and learn about the norms and attitudes of society in order to be able to find their bearings in it. He defines the concept of education as a “process of acquiring skills in the areas of cultural, social, subjective and practical education” (ibid., 106). Education is based on a child’s interaction with his or her (social) environment and, in the process, on his or her active participation in the reality they live in. Rauschenbach considers these dimensions of education to be equally important for the child’s development. The interplay of these dimensions begins at home, with the birth of the child. Education professionals should start by taking the child’s previous experiences and family situation into account, and then observe and foster the child’s individual development and learning progress. Cooperation with the child’s family is imperative here (cf. ibid., 153 f.).

“If subsequently education, *Erziehung* and care are thought of as a single entity, then it will be nearly impossible to deny that education truly begins on day one” (ibid., 106 f.).

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Early childhood education and care before primary school

The 12th Report on Children and Youth is based on the idea of a child as an active, communicative and competent participant in his or her education and development process from birth on. The child acquires his or her experienced reality by appropriating the cultural, social, subjective and material world around him or her. The younger the child, the more inextricably these four ways of relating to the world are linked.

From minute zero, newborns are taking in the world around them, and learn to process different types of impressions and communicate with their caregivers. Here we see a reciprocal interaction between the child and his or her environment, which is described as a co-construction process. Peers also play an important role in this process because when children confront something together, this enables them “to recognise and understand different points of view and, thus, qualitatively change their own understanding of the world” (Tietze 2006, 83). When a child receives loving and attentive care from his or her caregivers, he or she is empowered to make sense of his or her world actively and independently. This is influenced, especially in early childhood, by biological factors (genetic disposition, gender, temperament) as well as by external factors (level of education of the child’s family members, living situation). The home is referred to as the “central educational environment of the preschool-aged child” (ibid., 85), since it lays the

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foundations for further educational experiences. In the process, it can also be a place where distinctions emerge. The parents can only stimulate and pass on to the child that which they are capable of. “Based on that and the child’s own right to education, the education of a (young) child at home can be seen not only as the parents’ concern but also as a concern of society as a whole” (ibid., 85). In order to better the quality of the education at home, the child should be provided with other places where they can educate themselves, such as day care centres or full day childcare centres.

The concept of education in early childhood education according to Gerd E. Schäfer

In the open education plan for full day childcare centres in North Rhine–Westphalia, Gerd E. Schäfer criticised the application of the concept of education as sharing knowledge and fostering the child’s ability to acquire skills (cf. Schäfer 2007, 16 f.) as well as the fact that the terms “learning” and “education” are often equated in today’s educational debate (cf. Schäfer 2007, 16 f.), arguing that education is more than just learning (cf. ibid., 29). Schäfer assumes that newborn children are, actively and of their own accord, making sense of their social and cultural surroundings (cf. ibid., 34) – which is, in turn, a prerequisite for subsequent learning and development processes (cf. ibid., 20). He refers to the child’s relations to others and to society as “the starting point and heart of a child’s learning” (ibid., 41). As far as he is concerned, the child is competent to carry out his or her own educational processes if given encouragement and social support (cf. ibid., 41). The child’s educational processes are characterised by a high level of concentration and perseverance in his or her activities, which Maria Montessori “deemed the main aspect of early childhood learning” (ibid., 24). Schäfer talks about “investigative learning” (ibid., 28f.) in which the child can access his or her subjective understanding of reality through imagination and play. Furthermore, he makes a reference to Piaget who says that children use individual resources and tools in order to grasp new knowledge and apply it to their previous experiences. This occurs via the reciprocal adaptation of the child’s subjective thought patterns and his or her environment. Children need people who help them use their cognitive tools – but who also allow them to think for themselves (cf. ibid., 36 f.).

Relationships as a prerequisite for education

The quality of the relationships between the child and adults is a cornerstone for the child’s self-education processes (cf. Berlin Senate Administration for Education, Youth and Sport [Senatsverwaltung für Bildung, Jugend und Sport] 2004, 18ff.).

Interim conclusion

Summarising Gerd E. Schäfer’s ideas it may therefore be said that educational processes take place “first of all on the basis of subjective possibilities of thought and action; second as part of the interplay with social norms and, third, in the inherent order of language(s)” (Schäfer 2007, 42f.).

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Even the earliest concepts of education were closely intertwined with a person's upbringing, or *Erziehung*. In the current discourse surrounding early childhood education, the argument is being made for an interplay of education, *Erziehung* and care – these concepts cannot be separated from one another. Early childhood education processes are directly related to the experiences of the child and described as holistic, complex and active, and embedded in social relationships. Gender-specific, social, ethnic and religious affiliations of the child and his or her family shape the world the child has to make sense of (cf. Senatsverwaltung für Bildung, Jugend und Sport 2004, 11). Children want to figure out the world in which they live for themselves. A child's individual education processes are dependent on a supportive environment as well as attentive caregivers who can foster the child's process of assimilating the world.

4. From the philosophy of education to today's early childhood education discourse

In the following, we shall discuss the question of the extent to which the concept of education of today's early childhood education discourse is justified from a historical perspective.

Education begins at birth

In current cognitive research, scientists differentiate between infant brain development starting at birth and the ways in which an infant makes sense of his or her surroundings: when a baby is born, his or her brain undergoes a huge developmental leap. Every impression and sensory perception influences it. At birth, all the neurons in the infant's brain are already formed: however, they only later connect as a result of sensory input and signals, which is to say, experiences. Hence, every child possesses educational potential from the moment it is born. The way that potential is used, however, depends greatly on the educational possibilities of the world into which the child is born and the infant's interactions with other people (cf. Bumann 2008, 24 f.).

Pestalozzi observed that children go through different stages of maturity over the course of their development – as did Rousseau, who referred to children as people in the making. In the field of cognitive development, experts point to windows of opportunity during which the child is ready to complete certain educational processes. However, if the child has not yet reached that stage, he or she will reject the stimuli offered. This means that education cannot be forced on a child. It must instead happen spontaneously and, in early childhood, playfully (cf. Bumann 2008, 24f.).

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Putting it into practice

Education professionals should base the care they provide on the individual developmental stage of each child, and offer him or her activities to differentiate and further develop his or her abilities.

Education by way of self-education

According to the aforementioned philosophers of education, an individual must be free to think and act in order to acquire knowledge. In contemporary discussions surrounding early childhood development, children are described as competent participants in shaping their own developmental and educational processes. With the help of individual resources and tools, they take ownership of and process the reality in which they live in an active and self-driven way. Through play and imagination, children can perceive and improve their own skills, i.e., can educate themselves.

Kant says that a person only becomes a person once through *Erziehung*, i.e., that an interlocutor is necessary for the development of his or her intellectual and physical abilities. This illustrates the responsibility of the person providing the *Erziehung* as well as the role of the people in the child's environment with regard to the child's self-education processes. In his attachment theory, child development expert John Bowlby describes how children learn in early childhood. Only once a child forms an emotional bond to an attachment figure can he or she explore his or her world (cf. Bumann 2008, 24f.).

Exploration

Through exploration the child examines his or her surroundings. Exploration is thus the basis for investigation and self-education. Especially in early childhood institutions, education is closely linked to the education professional or caregiver (cf. Becker-Stoll et al. 2009, 37).

Education as the key to understanding the reality in which one lives

In today's early childhood education discourse, a child's self-education processes are described embedded in social relationships and in the interaction with these self-education processes. In his or her educational processes, the child is dependent on attentive and responsive care and support from his or her caregivers. The family is the starting point for childhood learning and lays the foundations for future education processes.

In today's early childhood education discourse, education is characterised as the child's investigation of his or her social and cultural environment. The child perceives it from birth on and makes sense of the world on his or her own by structuring impressions and experiences. In order to form a subjective view of his or her reality, the child needs a stimulating learning environment. In this process, the child and his or her environment are continually adjusting to one another. Humboldt was already describing education as a relationship between the "ego"

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and the “world”. A person attains his or her individuality through interaction with the world around them.

Maturity as the goal of education

As far as Kant was concerned, the goal of education was to produce autonomous people who used their intellect in order to break out of their own immaturity and lead a self-determined life. People should take responsibility for their actions and continue to develop themselves. Klafki, too, believed that the goal of education was maturity. According to him, a person must possess the following qualities for that to happen: critical faculties, concrete knowledge, self-awareness and a sense of solidarity. The Child and Youth Services Act (Kinder- und Jugendgesetz) states that the purpose of child day care is to help a child develop into an autonomous and social personality. The social, emotional and intellectual abilities of the children should be fostered in the process (cf. Stascheit 2009, 1184).

Education for all

Pestalozzi argued for an education that trained a person’s intellectual, emotional and practical abilities – he spoke of education of the head, hand and heart. He believed that life itself educates a person. First and foremost, his priority was the general shaping of human character; the question of professional or vocational training was important, but secondary. Present-day debates on educational opportunities and risks explore a number of factors relating to children’s familial and cultural background. The goal of early-years institutional day care is to provide children from all different backgrounds with the same opportunities for their education and future.

Differentiating versus unifying the concept of education

The continuous differentiation of educational concepts and the social institutions responsible for implementing them have come under criticism in today’s debate. Until now, care, defined as providing for a child’s physical and emotional needs, was mostly assigned to the family, *Erziehung* to full day childcare centres and education to schools. But the current discourse talks of education, *Erziehung* and care as a triad. According to this idea, all three components start to take effect when a child is born into a family. They are fostered and complemented by preschool institutions and continue at school. Klafki initially differentiated between formal and material education. He argued that, by combining these facets of education, people could become capable of developing their own ways of acting – which he referred to as categorial education.

Quality of the institution as a precondition for education

The quality of institutionalised early childhood education and care is shaped by a number of factors. The educator-child relationship, the group size and the training of the education professionals are what has been called the “iron triangle of structural quality” (cf. Viernickel & Schwarz 2009, 10). These factors exhibit stable correlations with the quality of the pedagogical processes and children’s development.

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Importance of the institution's quality

The quality of an institution strongly influences the developmental opportunities of the child, especially during his or her first years of life (cf. Colberg-Schrader 2003, 268).

The point is also made that institutionalised care, especially of children from families with limited access to education, will only have a positive effect on the development of the child if it is high-quality care. The latter can balance out social disadvantages and enable the child to be fostered in a way that is age and developmentally appropriate.

This calls for a stable educational partnership with the child's parents, since the work in the childcare facility is always complementary to the education, *Erziehung* and care provided by the parents (cf. Becker-Stoll 2010, 20).

5. Conclusion

Now we revisit the question: Is the understanding of education in today's early childhood education discourse compatible with historical concepts of education?

Education is characterised, both historically and in today's early childhood education discourse, as a lifelong process that begins at birth. Both discourses talk about the self-driven actions of the child in his or her developmental and educational processes. The prerequisite for that is giving the child freedom to explore and play on his or her own. Rousseau and Humboldt, and later Klafki, talked about the individual's investigation of his or her world. Early childhood education should, according to the current discourse, give all children – regardless of their social or ethnic background – equal educational opportunities. Pestalozzi and Humboldt were committed to the education of children from all social classes within the school system. They also described the relation between the self and the world, and the necessity of making education accessible to all children.

Today the importance of the emotional bond of the child to an attachment figure is emphasised, as it is considered a prerequisite for education. Bowlby argues that stable attachment behaviour is what gives the child the freedom to explore and thus learn on his or her own. The historical discourse also speaks of education with the help of an interlocutor.

From an educational philosophy perspective, in particular, the goal of education is maturity. The goal in today's early childhood education discourse is also for the child to grow up into an independent personality. Both in terms of the past and present education discourses, the goal of education is to help children grow into people who can lead a free and self-determined lifestyle.

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In today's early childhood education discourse, education, *Erziehung* and care are increasingly seen as a unified concept. In addition, more importance is being placed on the quality of day care because its quality also greatly impacts the child's subsequent educational opportunities.

We conclude that there are many similarities between our understanding of education in today's early childhood education debate and the historical philosophy of education perspective. The concept of education currently being discussed is generally compatible with the basic ideas and visions of historical philosophers of education.

Summary

Education...

- *is a lifelong process*
- *starts at birth – the child is active and competent*
- *is a child's exploration of his or her environment*
- *should bring about equal opportunities, regardless of the child's social or cultural background*
- *occurs at home as the main education environment of the child*
- *is informed by the quality of the educational institutions and their relationships*
- *can only be seen in combination with *Erziehung* and care (triad)*

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6. Questions and further information

6.1 Tasks for reviewing the text



TASK 1:

Name the features and criteria of education from a historical perspective. To what extent are these reflected in today's idea of the child?



TASK 2:

The institutional expansion of childcare, especially for children under three years of age, took very different courses in the formerly divided East and West Germany. Debate the following question: Is it still possible to see historically rooted differences in the way care for children under the age of three is seen in the former East and West Germany today? If so, please identify and describe them.



TASK 3:

List the current objectives of early childhood education and care. To what extent can these goals be implemented in today's pedagogical practice? What additional resources might early childhood education institutions and education professionals need?

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6.3 Glossary

Self-education processes In today's early childhood education discourse, the infant is described as active, communicative and competent from birth onward. Through "investigative learning" (Schäfer 2007, 28), the child spontaneously and of his or her own accord discovers the world and the reality in which he or she lives.

Relationships as a precondition of education The home is considered the "main educational environment of the child" (Tietze 2006, 85). The quality of the relationships the child experiences at home will affect his or her further development. In full day childcare centres, too, the education professional's relationship with the child is considered the "starting point and heart of a child's learning" (Schäfer 2007, 41). The child needs safe surroundings in order to explore his or her environment autonomously.

KiTa Fachtexte is a collaboration between the Alice Salomon University of Applied Sciences, the FRÖBEL group, and the professional development initiative for early childhood professionals WiFF. KiTa Fachtexte wants to support lecturers and students at universities and professionals in day care centres and day nurseries by providing the latest specialist texts for study and practice. All specialist texts are available at: www.kita-fachtexte.de

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