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An Evaluation of How Life Span Approach Explains Human Development - Essay Sample Essay

# Introduction

Traditional theories of human development were majorly involved in the study of the developmental stages that children underwent. These theories, however, did not pay any attention to other developmental changes that occurred after adolescence because the theorists believed that they had a very insignificant contribution to the overall development of an individual. However, during the latter half of the 20th century, psychologists began realizing that people kept on changing even after they had gone past the adolescent stage. This new knowledge influenced the work of later psychologists most notably Paul Baltes (1936-2006) to develop theories which came to be known as the lifespan approach to human development. The lifespan approach argues that human development does end at puberty. Instead, it's a lifelong process which only terminates when an individual dies (Gonchap, 2012). The lifespan approach has seven main features. These features are: development being a lifelong process, development being multidirectional and multidimensional. human development exhibiting plasticity, development encompassing gains and losses, human development being multidisciplinary, development baing history embedded, being contextual as well as influenced by socio-cultural factors (Gonchap, 2012). This paper aims to use Baltes and Erikson's theories to evaluate how lifespan approach explains human development. It will also compare these lifespan theories with Piaget's theory to determine whether indeed the lifespan approach is better than traditional theories when it comes to human development.

According to Baltes Theory, human development does not stop at puberty; it continues even during the aging times (Baltes, 2005). This development, although grouped in several stages, occurs continuously. It starts when children are born and begin exploring the world around them using trial and error methods. The nurture theory comes into play when the people around them show them what to do and what not to do. The children gradually develop the ability to self-regulate based on their advanced knowledge of what is wrong and what is right. As children enter adolescence, they discover that they can optimize specific activities in their lives by making sacrifices (Dacey & Travers, 2002).

Finally, when people age, they begin to consider the consequences of whatever choices they make. This logical approach towards life issues is due to their past historical experiences. Baltes also argues that as an individual grows, several dimensions influence their development and their social-emotional, cognitive, spiritual and biological factors (Health Research Finding, 2018). Also, Baltes theory argues that although some aspects like cognitive function and eyesight decline as one gets older, other elements increase and these include the ability of the brain to reorganize itself for it to become more efficient (Baltes, 2005). Plasticity is also displayed as a person is exposed to different environments, e.g., a person with poor eyesight will detect the location of sounds with more precision than the one with fully functional vision.

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**Didier Musso** 

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